R3840-15F

AN OPINION MAKER'S GUIDE TO CHILDREN IN ELECTION YEAR 1992

Photo by Susie Fitzhugh

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

A Prayer / Pledge of Responsibility for Children

We pray [accept responsibility] for children
who sneak popsicles before supper,
who erase holes in math workbooks,
who can never find their shoes.

And we pray [accept responsibility] for those
who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers,
who never "counted potatoes,"
who were born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,
who never go to the circus,
who live in an X-rated world.

We pray [accept responsibility] for children
who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,
who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.

And we pray [accept responsibility] for those
who never get dessert,
who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
who watch their parents watch them die,
who can't find any bread to steal,
who don't have any rooms to clean up,
whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
whose monsters are real.

We pray [accept responsibility] for children
who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food,
who like ghost stories,
who shove dirty clothes under the bed, and never rinse out the tub,
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
who squirm in church or temple and scream in the phone,
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and whose smiles can make us cry.

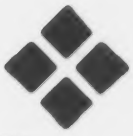
And we pray [accept responsibility] for those
whose nightmares come in the daytime,
who will eat anything,
who have never seen a dentist,
who aren't spoiled by anybody,
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
who live and move, but have no being.

We pray [accept responsibility] for children who want to be carried
and for those who must,
for those we never give up on and for those
who don't get a second chance.

For those we smother ... and for those who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.

Adapted from Ina J. Hughs

AN OPINION MAKER'S GUIDE TO CHILDREN IN ELECTION YEAR 1992



LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

Children's Defense Fund

About CDF

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) exists to provide a strong and effective voice for the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor, minority, and disabled children. Our goal is to educate the nation about the needs of children and encourage preventive investment in children before they get sick, drop out of school, suffer family breakdown, or get into trouble.

CDF is a unique organization. CDF focuses on programs and policies that affect large numbers of children, rather than on helping families on a case-by-case basis. Our staff includes specialists in health, education, child welfare, mental health, child development, adolescent pregnancy prevention, family income, and youth employment. CDF gathers data and disseminates information on key issues affecting children. We monitor the development and implementation of federal and state policies. We provide information, technical assistance, and support to a network of state and local child advocates, service providers, and public and private sector officials and leaders. We pursue an annual legislative agenda in the U.S. Congress and litigate selected cases of major importance. CDF's major initiatives include our adolescent pregnancy prevention program and a prenatal care and child health campaign. CDF educates hundreds of thousands of citizens annually about children's needs and responsible policy options for meeting those needs.

CDF is a national organization with roots in communities across America. Although our main office is in Washington, D.C., we reach out to towns and cities across the country to monitor the effects of changes in national and state policies and to help people and organizations concerned with what happens to children. CDF maintains state offices in Minnesota, Ohio, and Texas; a Prenatal Caring and Child Advocacy Project in Marlboro County, South Carolina; and local project offices in the District of Columbia and Cleveland-Cuyahoga County, Ohio. CDF has developed cooperative projects with groups in many states.

CDF is a private nonprofit organization supported by foundations, corporate grants, and individual donations.

Copyright © 1991 by the Children's Defense Fund. All Rights Reserved.

ISBN: 0-938008-90-0
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 91-076811

CONTENTS

PART I. INTRODUCTION 1

Leave No Child Behind 3
America's Third World Within 4
All Our Children Are At Risk and All Our Parents Need To Be Valued and Supported 6
What Every American Must Do in 1992: Redefine Our Real National Security 6
A Healthy Start, a Head Start, and a Fair Start for Every American Child 8
Seven Actions You Can Take To Protect Children and Strengthen Family and Community Values in America 8

Boxes:

Four Years in the Lives of America's Children 4
Spending Priorities 7
National Choices 9
Priority Agenda for 1992 10
Urgent Choices America Must Make in 1992 To Guarantee Every Child a Head Start, a Healthy Start, and a Fair Start 12
Investment Choices 13

Ten Basic Facts About America's Children 16
Challenges 18
The Most Common Excuses for Letting Children Fall Behind — And the Answers 22

PART II. U.S. CHILDREN IN THE WORLD 25

How America Measures Up 27
Investments in Children 29

PART III. HOW ARE AMERICA'S CHILDREN DOING? 31

The Health of America's Children 33
Jobs and Family Income 36
Child Poverty 40
Families and the Crisis in Affordable Housing 44
Children and Families in Crisis 47
Adolescents in Trouble: Pregnancy, Substance Abuse, Violence, and Victimization 50
Young Children and School Readiness 53
The Education of America's Children 57

PART IV. CHILDREN IN AMERICA'S STATES AND CITIES 61

Infant Mortality, 1988 65

Infant Mortality Rate, by Race, 1988 66

Babies Born to Mothers Receiving Early Prenatal Care, 1988 67

Children's Participation in Medicaid, FY 1990 68

Births to Teenage Women, 1988 69

Current Expenditure Per Pupil in Average Daily Attendance in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1987-88 and Percent Change Since 1979-1980 70

Public High School Graduation Ratio, 1988 71

Poverty Among Related Children Under Age 18, Average for 1983-1987 72

Maximum AFDC Grant for a Family of Three, and as a Percent of the Poverty Level, January 1991 73

The Affordability of Housing: Fair Market Rent as a Percent of Family Income at the Poverty Level, October 1990 74

Infant Mortality Rate, Cities of 500,000 or Greater Population, 1988 75

PART V. WE *CAN* ACT TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND 77

Can-Do America 81

PART VI. WHAT THE POLLS SAY 83

PART VII. QUESTIONS TO ASK 87

Questions Every American Should Be Able To Answer 89

Urgent Questions for Candidates Running for State Offices 91

Urgent Questions for Candidates Running for the U.S. House and Senate 92

PART VIII. STEPS TO TAKE 93

Part I

INTRODUCTION

Photo by Kathy Sloane

"Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute."

Psalm 82:3

"I just hope I can end up in prison rather than dead."

A Latino youth in Los Angeles
unable to escape gang violence,
broadcast on CNN, September 15, 1991

"My daughter and grandchildren would be homeless if I did not own a second house. They cannot make it on her husband's wages."

An upper-middle-class
New England mother

"Wall Street is one of the few places on earth where an employee in his thirties could receive nearly $5 million for one year's work and still feel underpaid."

The Washington Post
September 22, 1991

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies ... a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

"This world in arms is not spending money alone.

"It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children."

Dwight David Eisenhower,
"The Chance for Peace," delivered before the
American Society of Newspaper Editors,
April 16, 1953

LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

America is at war at home. As Communism is collapsing all around the world, the American Dream is collapsing all around America for millions of children, youths, and families in all racial and income groups.

We are in danger of becoming two nations: one of First World privilege and another of Third World deprivation, struggling against increasing odds to peacefully co-exist as a beleaguered middle class barely holds on. The poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer — pitting American against American — as economic uncertainty and downturn increase our fears, our business failures, and our poverty rates. While the proportion of children living in doubled-up households rose by 42 percent — to 5 million — between 1970 and 1989, the former head of Salomon Brothers could afford to spend $20 million renovating his New York City apartment.

Family and community values and supports are disintegrating, reflecting the spiritual as well as economic poverty permeating our nation. The more than 1 million babies born to unmarried mothers in America just in 1988 would fill the city of Dallas. The 500,000 children who suffered through their parents' divorces in 1990 are more than the population of New Orleans. Our 500,000 runaway youths exceed the population of Denver, and our 125,000 "thrown-away" children cast out by their parents top all the refugees we admit each year from all the nations of the world. The more than 2 million American women, most of childbearing age, who used cocaine in 1990 are more than the population of Medelin, Colombia. Epidemic violence and crime — fueled by unbridled trafficking in guns — affects every fourteenth American and results in a homicide every 24 minutes. No fact tells us more clearly that something is badly awry in American society than the reported abuse or neglect in 1990 of an American child every 13 seconds.

Although increasing numbers of middle-class Americans lack essential health care, housing, and child care, the poor suffer far worse. Thousands of children — one every 53 minutes — are dying from poverty in rich America every year and millions more suffer preventable sickness and chronic diseases that saddle taxpayers with billions of unnecessary costs. It is unworthy of America to let every fifth American child (13.4 million) grow up poor. And if we do not act now to prevent escalating child and family poverty, by the year 2000 one in four U.S. children will be poor. Between 1979 and 1990 child poverty in the United States grew by 26 percent

while our real Gross National Product (GNP) grew more than one-fourth. In the last year alone more than 840,000 children fell into poverty: they could fill the Rose Bowl eight times. These poor children are part of a growing Third World within our nation that we continue to ignore at our economic and moral peril.

America's Third World Within

- There are more poor children in America (13.4 million in 1990) than there are citizens in Zimbabwe or in Honduras, Panama, and Nicaragua combined.
- There are more poor people living in America (33,585,000 in 1990) than there are people living in Iraq, Kuwait, Israel, and Jordan combined or in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait together.

Four Years in the Lives of America's Children

If we do not act immediately to speak for America's children and change the facts that leave too many of them unhealthy, ill-fed, and under-educated, then during the next four years:

1,080,000	American babies will be born at low birthweight, multiplying their risk of death or disability.
143,619	babies will die before their first birthday.
4,400,000	babies will be born to unmarried women.
2,000,000	babies will be born to teen mothers.
15,856	children (19 or younger) will die by firearms.
2,784	children (younger than five) will die by homicide.
9,208	children (19 or younger) will commit suicide.
1,620,000	young people ages 16 to 24 will fail to complete high school.
3,780,000	young people will finish high school but not enroll in college.
599,076	children younger than 18 will be arrested for alcohol-related offenses, 359,600 for drug offenses, and 338,292 for violent crimes.
7,911,532	public school students will be suspended.
3,600,000	infants will be born into poverty.

- During 1990 there were more unemployed Americans (19,786,000) than the total population of the Baltic republics or the total labor force of Poland.
- More American children (5,754,000 in 1990) are growing up in households with incomes less than *half* the poverty level than the entire population of Singapore, or Lebanon, or the capital of Bangladesh.
- More American citizens lack health insurance (34,629,000) than there are Canadian citizens.
- The estimated 100,000 children who go to sleep homeless each night in America exceed the 84,000 inhabitants of Grenada we spent tens of millions of dollars to invade and protect.

Millions of American children with special needs are struggling to run the race with their peers without adequate supports.

- Fewer than one-third of the severely emotionally disturbed children and their parents are getting all the help they need from our mental health systems.
- An estimated 407,000 children, almost a 50 percent increase since 1986, depend on an overwhelmed, inadequate foster care system.
- The infants born drug-exposed each year, estimated at 100,000 to 375,000 infants, lack the specialized supports and adequate treatment needed for themselves or their mothers.

America's children are not being prepared adequately to compete in the world race for the future. They:

- Are more likely to die in the first year of life than children in 18 other countries;
- Are less likely to be fully immunized against polio in infancy than children in 16 other nations;
- Lack the minimal health insurance and health care guaranteed by most other industrialized nations;
- Are far more likely to be poor than children in other industrialized nations studied;
- Lack enough safe, affordable child care when their parents must work outside the home or adequate income security if a parent wants to remain at home;
- Lag behind Japanese children in mathematics, Iranian children in geography, and Spanish children in science;
- Are more likely to become pregnant than teens in five other nations studied and more likely to bear a child than teens in 11 other nations studied;

- Do not have a nation willing to sign or ratify a Convention on the Rights of the Child, which more than 140 other countries have done. The United States, along with Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Colombia, is among the small group of nonsigners of what has become a world norm of commitment to the protection of children.

All Our Children Are At Risk and All Parents Need To Be Valued and Supported

It is not just poor and minority children who are victims of our society's national neglect and waning commitment to passing on a safer, fairer, and better country than we inherited. All our children are threatened by pesticides and toxic wastes and chemicals polluting the air, water, earth, and ozone layer. No parent can shut out completely the pollution of our airwaves and popular culture, which glorify excessive violence, profligate consumption, easy sex and greed, and depict deadly alcohol and tobacco products as fun, glamorous, and macho. While tens of thousands of undereducated, jobless, poor youths trapped in inner-city war zones see the future as a choice only between prison and death, hundreds of thousands of middle-class youths and young families with declining wages see the future as a choice between a house and a child. Countless emotionally as well as physically abandoned children have no reliable adult lifelines to hang on to or come home to and no sturdy moral compasses to help them navigate the mountains and valleys on the road to the future. So they seek refuge in the narcotics of things and drugs and gangs and cults from all the voids left by family and community.

Parents are and should be the most important determinants of their children's values and well-being. But all parents need help and real choices. Their crucial role of nurturing the next generation needs to be valued and supported by their communities, by their employers, and by their governments at all levels. Few unemployed parents can control the export of needed jobs abroad or allay a declining manufacturing sector at home. Few middle- and low-income parents can meet their children's rising college and housing costs without government assistance. America's parents alone cannot win the battle to balance their household budgets and juggle work-family needs on declining wages and jobs without affordable child care and health care, housing subsidies, and job creation from government and employers.

What Every American Must Do in 1992: Redefine Our Real National Security

The future of our children and nation is too important to leave to just politicians, just advocates, just the public sector, or just the

private sector. It is too important to leave to just Democrats or Republicans, liberals or moderates or conservatives, or to *any* one segment of our society. National child neglect will not be cured by feel-good, no-cost, no-sacrifice remedies wrapped up in slick slogans. It will be solved by you, opinion and community leaders, and by millions of Americans citizen by citizen, parent by parent, youth by youth, congregation by congregation, foundation by foundation, business by business, neighborhood by neighborhood, city by city, and state by state — using your individual and collective voices and votes, to demand that our leaders get about the business of protecting and investing in our real national security, which is:

- Healthy, educated children and stable families;
- Safe streets, schools, neighborhoods, highways, bridges, and cities;
- Clean food, air, water, and soil;
- Tolerance urged and brotherhood practiced;
- Democratic ideals exported by example rather than force.

We are not isolationists. But we believe that if your own house is on fire you put it out first before running around the world putting out your neighbors' fires.

As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, the Children's Defense Fund does not seek to affect the election of any candidate for any office. We believe that *who* is elected and their party affiliation matters far less than *what* they stand for, the investment priorities they propose and then carry out, and the values and direction they want our great nation — the sole remaining superpower in the nuclear age — to take. A low-birthweight infant, or a hungry, abused, homeless, or uneducated child could not care less about party affiliation or political rhetoric. What they need is help and action now. America's future work force and world leadership in

Spending Priorities

Every hour during the current fiscal year, the federal government spends:

- $33.7 million on national defense,
- $23.6 million on the national debt,
- $8.7 million on the S&L bailout,
- $2.9 million on education, and
- $1.8 million on children's health.

the next century are being determined right now in the minds and bodies and spirits of the millions of children we are neglecting and leaving behind today and by the leaders you help elect.

A Healthy Start, a Head Start, and a Fair Start for Every American Child

In 1992 President Bush and Democratic hopefuls campaign for the presidency; candidates vie for 12 governorships, for 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, for 33 U.S. Senate seats; and hundreds of thousands of hopefuls pursue office among our 90,000 state, county, municipal, school, and special district governments. The Children's Defense Fund seeks every American's pledge to examine these candidates closely about their commitment and strategies to ensure a Healthy Start, a Head Start, and a Fair Start for all our children and families right here at home. Are they willing to heal rather than exacerbate our growing racial divisions through demagogic or subliminal messages? To foster tolerance rather than intolerance? Are they willing to vote to reverse the trends of the 1970s and 1980s in which the wealth and luxuries of the few were increased at the expense of the necessities of the many? Will they work to change unjust federal budget priorities that give the military and the rich preferential call on the national purse while millions of American children are falling further behind their peers at home and in some competitor nations?

Seven Actions You Can Take To Protect Children and Strengthen Family and Community Values in America

"They refuse justice to orphans and the rights of the poor. Should I sit back and act as though nothing is going on? the Lord asks. Shouldn't I punish a nation such as this?"

Jeremiah 28:29

"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit."

Luke 12:35

"I know only two things for certain. One is that we gain nothing by walking around the difficulties and merely indulging in wishful thinking. The other is that there is always something one can do oneself. In the most modest form, this means: to study, to try to sort out different proposals, and weigh the effect of proposed solutions — even if they are only partial solutions. Otherwise there would be nothing left

but to give up. And it is not worthy of human beings to give up. This wonderful planet that we have been given ... should we not be capable of preserving it, guarding its peace, developing its resources to share in justice with our fellow humans?"

Nobel Laureate Alva Myrdal

Justice and liberty, like the future, are neither entitlements nor free gifts. They have to be fought for and struggled for by *every* American. Here are some steps each of us can take in 1992 to help save America's children and future. Children cannot vote or lobby or write editorials or letters to the editor. But *you* can.

1. We can reject the false lessons and excuses that we all have been too ready to accept, and as a people face up to our growing domestic and new world challenges. There is no free lunch. Problems won't disappear if we just ignore them. Packaging and style are not more important than content and substance. We can't have our national cake and eat it too. Feeling good is not better than doing good. Money will not buy meaning and politics is not exempt from principles. Slogans and symbols are not a substitute for truth,

National Choices

- If we just spend on defense in 1992 what we spent in the average year of the Cold War — when there *was* a Cold War — we would save $40 billion compared with what the Administration proposed for that fiscal year. Communism has collapsed and the threat that was the basis for our massive defense spending has mostly evaporated, but we still are spending in real terms tens of billions of dollars more each year than we averaged when Americans believed there was a real peril (including the years of the Korean and Vietnam wars).
- If we just spend in 1992 on defense what we spent in the last year of the Eisenhower Administration, we would save $41 billion.
- If we just spend in 1992 on defense what we spent the year after Russia invaded Afghanistan, when we were building up the military, we would save $78 billion.
- If we just spend in 1992 on defense what we spent in the average year of Ronald Reagan's first term, we would save $41 billion.

(All numbers are inflation-adjusted.)

and honesty is still the best policy. Smart bombs will not make us more secure than smart children. Some government social programs (Head Start) do work and some defense systems (the B-2 bomber) don't. Much-needed private charity is a complement to, not a substitute for, public justice. Volunteers, however wonderful, cannot heal the millions of uninsured sick, build the tens of thousands of housing units homeless people and young families need, or bolster the wages of millions of underemployed citizens. Prisons are not a better investment than quality preschool education or jobs. Ad campaigns that tell children to just say no without giving them hope and better alternatives won't keep them from the clutches of drug dealers or teen parenthood. The minority young and the poor are not ethically dispensable in a democratic society nor practically dispensable to our work force. Racial fears are not fair game for cynical media manipulation and quick political gain — 600,000 lives were given in the Civil War and thousands more during the post-Reconstruction period and civil rights movement to make America live up to its stated ideals of brotherhood.

Priority Agenda for 1992

Being for children in 1992 does not mean more rhetoric or promises. It means committing to a Healthy Start, a Head Start, and a Fair Start for every American child. These investments will prevent thousands of child deaths and illnesses immediately and get hundreds of thousands of young children ready for school. They also will save tens of millions of dollars in later sickness, remedial education, teen pregnancy, welfare, and prison costs.

A Healthy Start for Every Child Right Now

Congress already has voted to extend Medicaid health coverage to every poor child by 2002. But basic health care for every child and mother — including prenatal and maternity care, check-ups, immunizations, and care for sick and disabled children — cannot wait. The president and Congress must act in 1992 to guarantee a Healthy Start for *every* child.

A Head Start for Every Child Right Now

Quality preschool, child care, and Head Start programs help keep children at grade level, help children get ready for school, and help prevent costly special education and teen pregnancy. President Bush says he's for Head Start and getting children ready for school. Congress says it's for

2. Insist that political leaders act to ensure that no child will be left behind by the end of this decade. Don't let them off with easy rhetoric, general promises, more studies and commissions, or kissing babies. We need our officials to take at least the actions set out in the box on page 10 to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, and a Fair Start. Two require not a dime; they require commitment to American ideals of equal opportunity and family. The rest require preventive investments that will yield far greater long-term savings and productivity. We cannot afford not to do them. For example, every dollar invested in prenatal care saves $3.00; every dollar invested in immunizations saves $10; every dollar invested in Head Start saves $4.75. *Don't accept excuses for political neglect of children.* Many of our leaders from both parties at all levels of government would have us believe America has more will than wallet. The Persian Gulf, Panama, Grenada, and the savings and loan (S&L) bailout all attest to the truth that we have far more wallet than will and vision, and that we always can find a way to pay for what we want to do. You and I must tell all of our political leaders

Head Start and getting children ready for school. Let them put the money and their leadership behind their words. We cannot reach other national education goals without meeting this goal first. The president and Congress must act in 1992 to assure a Head Start for *every* child.

A Fair Start for Every Child Right Now

Poor children need a level playing field on which to run the race of life. An unhealthy or sick child will not learn well. A homeless child is disadvantaged in school. A hungry child cannot concentrate on her lessons. We should join other industrialized nations in ensuring every American family a minimum level of economic security through a refundable tax credit that helps middle-class families and leaves no poor family and child behind. The president and Congress must act in 1992 to provide a Fair Start for *every* child.

As Republican Rep. Jim Leach has suggested, all candidates should sign a pledge of tolerance to heal and not divide America on the basis of race, gender, income, or age. They also should pledge to join the more than 140 nations of the world in signing or ratifying the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. The president and Congress should see to it that the United States is the world's locomotive rather than caboose in acting to protect *every* child.

Urgent Choices America Must Make in 1992 To Guarantee Every Child a Head Start, a Healthy Start, and a Fair Start

Investments

To guarantee every child a Head Start:

$2.1 billion immediately in FY 1993, as the first step toward providing Head Start to all poor children by 1995. (Total 1995 cost is $6.1 billion above current spending.)

To guarantee every child a Healthy Start:

$3.0 billion immediately in FY 1993, to phase in basic health insurance coverage for *every* uninsured child and pregnant woman.

$0.5 billion immediately in FY 1993 to provide childhood vaccines to all children.

To guarantee every child a Fair Start:

$23 billion to $41 billion in FY 1993 as a minimum investment in buttressing family economic security and beginning to lift children out of poverty through a universal, refundable children's tax credit.

Total:

$28.6 billion to $46.6 billion total urgent investments toward guaranteeing every child a Head Start, a Healthy Start, and a Fair Start.

Savings and Revenue

$2.6 billion in savings from building three fewer B-2 "Stealth" bombers a year.

$2.0 billion in savings from building one fewer nuclear attack submarine a year.

More than $2.1 billion in savings from ending the production of strategic and theater nuclear missiles.

$25.5 billion in savings from reducing FY 1993 defense spending to the level of the average year of the Cold War.

$11.6 billion in revenues from eliminating the tax break for inherited capital gains.

$3.5 billion in revenue from increasing the top rate of the corporate tax by two percentage points (from 34 percent to 36 percent).

More than $13 billion in revenues from doubling the taxes on tobacco and alcohol.

Total:

More than $60.3 billion total savings and revenues.

that the nation can no longer ignore the opportunity to save 10,000 infant lives, or to alleviate child poverty because the political payoff is slight. How much is a child's life worth in America? And we must stop them from making promises to our children that they do not keep when budget time comes around. Study the most common political excuses you hear on page 22 and answer back. There is *no* excuse for hungry, homeless, unimmunized, undereducated children in a rich, democratic, and decent society.

Investment Choices

Preventive investments in children's programs have been proven to work *and* to save public dollars. We can choose to spend:

$1	on childhood immunizations	**or $10**	in later medical costs.
$1	on comprehensive maternity care for pregnant women through Medicaid	**or $3.38**	in later health costs.
$1	for quality preschool education, such as Head Start	**or $4.75**	for later special education, crime, welfare, and other costs.
$1	on food and nutrition counseling for pregnant women in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	**or $3.13**	in Medicaid costs due to low-birthweight babies.
$765	per month for homelessness prevention and support services in one model program	**or $3,000**	to shelter a homeless family in a hotel.
$4,500	per family for family preservation services that help keep families together	**or $10,000**	for one year of foster family care for one child.

3. Inform yourselves and others about the needs of children, about what already is working to meet those needs, and about how poorly America competes with other countries in protecting our young. Hold meetings to share information and disseminate CDF's and other national, state, and local child advocates' materials. Get the information out through the news media. Don't let anybody tell you that nothing works and that all is hopeless. Head Start works. Immunizations work. Preventive health checkups and nutrition supplements work. The problem is we don't invest enough in them to reach all children who need them. We know Head Start helps keep children at grade level, out of costly special education and teen parenthood. Then why don't we fund it for all eligible children by 1995 rather than the current one third who will get it?

4. Personalize child suffering. Begin a Child Watch Visitation Program in your community. Influential leaders must see and feel and personally understand child suffering and its connection to misguided local, state, and national policy and investment choices. Candidates and officeholders should visit Head Start, child care centers, health centers, and hospital intensive care and boarder baby wards to see America's future struggling for life or left abandoned. They must see and feel what works and what they can do. We urge citizens to probe candidates and officeholders about their commitment to specific issues of critical concern to local children. If they are members of Congress, write CDF for their voting record on key children's issues. And don't let a visit just be a political photo opportunity without a commitment to action. If you want training and information on how to conduct a Child Watch Visitation Program, write us.

5. Learn to communicate more effectively in order to mobilize citizen action on behalf of children. Whoever defines the problem and frames the issue controls the outcomes. Too many advocates for children and the poor talk in too complex and technical terms about programs and policies when what is needed is simple stories, backed by a few clearly stated numbers and trends, and a description of the one or few things that can be done by whom. CDF has resources available to help you learn how to communicate more effectively as we struggle to do so better ourselves.

6. Build strong, specific issue coalitions for children in 1992. Don't try to be for everything. Fight effectively for one or a very few achievable but important child goals. Educate candidates. Host candidate forums and debates as child advocates in Ohio, Minnesota, and Arizona did with success in 1990. As soon as possible, delegates to national and state conventions should be identified and visited and informed about the importance of investing in children

in 1992. CDF has a range of materials you can share with them including data on key child indicators in your own state and large cities. All state and national platforms should have specific commitments to Leave No Child Behind.

7. Don't ever give up or think you can't make a difference to children or the nation's course in 1992. As Alva Myrdal counsels, there is always something each of us can do. I believe in a *can-do America*. I can imagine an America where no child is left behind because they are poor. I can imagine an America where no child falls through the net of family and community supports because our nation's leaders set a tone of tolerance and excellence and caring. It doesn't cost a nickel to teach our children to respect other people's children even if they are of a different race or income or gender group. And it doesn't take a dime for us to teach our leaders the same respect. It takes a vote.

I can imagine an America whose foreign and domestic policies rest on what is good for children and envision a world order where no child anywhere is left to die because food and clean water and basic health care are not available. I can imagine America becoming the world's hero by saving millions of child lives by helping UNICEF provide simple oral rehydration salts for only 10 cents a packet.

I can imagine America's image and standing in the world zooming and inspiring others as we become known as the leading purveyor of humanitarian rather than military aid and as we fill the empty, bloated bellies of millions of Third World children at home and abroad with our surplus warehouses of food.

I can imagine America being remembered and honored in history as a nation that is living what it preaches at home and abroad and provides a beacon of democracy that will live in generations to come.

If you can imagine these things, too, join our crusade in 1992 — and for as long as it takes — to Leave No Child Behind.

Marian Wright Edelman

TEN BASIC FACTS ABOUT AMERICA'S CHILDREN

An entire generation of American children risks being left behind their parents and grandparents.

1. America's children are threatened by the economic vise that has closed on their families over the past two decades. Many families with children actually have lost ground as wages have fallen and income inequality has increased in the 1980s. The earnings of young workers and of workers without college degrees have eroded most seriously. **The median income of young families (headed by someone younger than 30) with children fell by 26 percent between 1973 and 1989.**

2. The collision between eroding family incomes and growing housing costs has postponed families' dreams of home ownership, forced families to live doubled-up in cramped quarters, and left some families and children in unsafe and unstable arrangements. Between 1970 and 1989 the proportion of children living in doubled-up households increased 42 percent, to almost 5 million children. **The National Academy of Sciences estimates that at least 100,000 children go to sleep homeless every night.**

3. American children's health and development is threatened further by lack of health insurance and lack of access to health care. **Between 9 million and 11 million children and about 10.6 million women of childbearing age are completely uninsured, and millions of others have insurance that is inadequate, failing to cover essential services.**

4. The lack of access to health care is reflected in the worsening or stagnation of many key health indicators in the 1980s. After many years of substantial progress, our nation's improvement in the rates of early prenatal care, low-birthweight births, and infant mortality has slowed down dramatically or stopped. Immunization rates have declined, leaving one-half or more of the infants or toddlers in many of our major cities unprotected against childhood disease. **The United States has slipped to nineteenth in the world in preventing infant deaths, behind such nations as Spain, Ireland, Hong Kong, and Singapore.**

5. In an increasingly knowledge-driven economy, our children's future is threatened by a lack of progress in educational achievement. More than 400,000 children drop out of school in the United States each year. **High school completion and postsecondary education are critical to economic security, but two of five high school graduates are not in college the following October.**

6. We are mortgaging America's future by consigning a growing number of children to poverty. The number of children in poverty increased by more than 3 million during the 1980s. **By 1990 more than 13 million children — more than one in five — were poor in America, and one in four infants and toddlers was poor.**

7. While many poor children are extraordinarily resilient, poverty places enormous obstacles in their way to adulthood. Poor children are more likely than other children to experience ill health and malnutrition while young, to have trouble in school, and to experience too-early childbearing and unemployment as adolescents. **For example, the 1987 high school dropout rate for poor youths ages 18 to 21 was more than twice as high as the dropout rate for nonpoor students of similar age.**

8. Millions of children and adolescents are not cared for and nurtured adequately. **An estimated 2.5 million children were reported abused or neglected in 1990, more than a 147 percent increase since 1979.**

9. Too many American adolescents — twice as many as in other industrialized countries — risk their futures through early pregnancy and childbearing. About 1 million teenage girls become pregnant each year, and about half give birth. In almost half of these births, the mother does not receive early prenatal care. Fewer than six of 10 adolescent mothers will obtain their high school diplomas by age 29, contributing to the high likelihood of poverty for both mother and child. **Early childbearing is related to poverty and low educational achievement: regardless of race, teens with below-average academic skills and from poor families are about five to seven times more likely to be parents than are teens with solid skills and from nonpoor families.**

10. Because of demographic changes, America faces a future in which children and young workers will be a shrinking share of the population. There will be 2 million fewer 18- to 24-year-olds in 1995 than in 1990, and in 1990 we had almost 3 million fewer than we did in 1985. **In 1995 almost one-third of young adults will be from minority groups, compared with less than one-quarter in 1985.**

CHALLENGES

"Long before I was struck with cancer, I felt something stirring in American society. It was a sense among the people of the country — Republicans and Democrats alike — that something was missing from their lives, something crucial .... My illness helped me to see that what was missing in society is what was missing in me: a little heart, a lot of brotherhood.

"The '80s were about acquiring — acquiring wealth, power, prestige. I know. I acquired more wealth, power and prestige than most. But you can acquire all you want and still feel empty. What power wouldn't I trade for a little more time with my family? What price wouldn't I pay for an evening with friends? It took a deadly illness to put me eye to eye with that truth, but it is a truth that the country, caught up in its ruthless ambitions and moral decay, can learn on my dime. I don't know who will lead us through the '90s, but they must be made to speak to this spiritual vacuum at the heart of American society, this tumor of the soul."

Lee Atwater
former Republican Party Chairman,
quoted in a *Life* magazine article,
February 1991

"If you want to keep your life style and you want to keep your fortunes and you want to keep the promise of this country for your children, we cannot continue on a course where the top level becomes ever wealthier and the bottom level becomes ever poorer. And for those who make catch-all statements like 'land of opportunity,' 'free enterprise,' 'personal incentive,' 'my father came here penniless' — those throwaway lines are inappropriate now. They don't recognize the problem. The problem is that we are growing a generation of children who lack that opportunity and who lack decent education and proper food."

Leonard Stern
Chief Executive Officer, Hartz Group, Inc./Hartz
Mountain Industries, 1989

In a December 17, 1989, *Washington Post* article, "The Costs of Leadership," former Federal Reserve Chair Paul Volcker wrote that America surely can afford to meet its pressing domestic needs: "It's a question of attitude, not of economics. You can afford what you think you really need — within limits. And I don't think we've reached those limits."

"The development and education of all our children from the earliest stages of their lives must be made a national priority, and throughout that process, the needs of the whole child, from conception through adolescence, must be addressed. Children must be better prepared for school and motivated to take advantage of educational opportunities. At the same time, the nation's schools must be restructured so that they respond more effectively to the changing developmental and educational needs of children ....

"In an earlier industrial era, the economy did not need to ensure that every child was well educated, partly because the available labor pool was large enough and partly because unskilled manual labor and low-skilled manufacturing jobs were sufficiently plentiful and well-paid to absorb those without higher-level skill. This is no longer the case. In twenty years, just as the baby boom generation begins to retire, the nation could face a labor shortage severe enough to stifle business at every level."

Committee for Economic Development
The Unfinished Agenda: A New Vision for Child Development and Education,
February 1991

"One thing I'm going to do is raise the level of public debate on how best to help our children. I'm going to talk and talk and talk until our country is working together to reach our children."

President George Bush
Littleton, Colorado, October 5, 1988

"One out of five children in America lives in poverty; many suffer from hunger and health problems; immunization is erratic, leading to the revival of childhood diseases once considered virtually eradicated ....

"Large numbers of needy children in the United States have no access to preschool programs; low pay and low status hamper the staffing of many centers. A dollar invested in preschool education

saves six times the amount otherwise spent on special education, welfare and law enforcement. In France preschool for three- to five-year-olds is free; 98 percent of the country's children attend such schools, more than three times the American figure; preschool teachers hold the equivalent of a masters degree; directors are often pediatric nurses trained in public health and child development.

"Even if moral considerations do not compel greater attention to young children, economic self-interest should. Today's neglected children are bound to impose an economic burden on American society for decades to come."

Robert Hormats
Vice Chairman of Goldman Sachs and former Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs (1981-1982),
Foreign Affairs, Summer 1991

"In dealing with the children of this country, we're talking about a group that doesn't vote, has no political clout and yet represents our destiny as a nation. As a nation, we should strive to see that our youngsters have whole and healthy bodies and minds, not only because we are a compassionate people but because in this tough, competitive world of ours this country can afford no less."

U.S. Senator Lloyd Bentsen
June 24, 1991

"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones ... it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea .... Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the ones by whom the stumbling block comes!"

Matthew 18:6-7

"[This] is America's opportunity to help bridge the gulf between the haves and the have nots. The question is whether America will do it. There is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that we now have the techniques and the resources to get rid of poverty. The real question is whether we have the will."

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Washington, D.C., at the National Cathedral, March 1968

"[This is] one of the rarest moments in history — a time when all around us the old order of things is crumbling and a new world society is painfully struggling to take shape. If you shrink from this struggle, and these many difficulties, you will betray the trust which your own position forces upon you. You live in the most privileged nation on earth. You are the most privileged citizens of that privileged nation; ... You can use your enormous privilege and opportunity to seek purely private pleasure and gain. But history will judge you, and, as the years pass, you will ultimately judge yourself, on the extent to which you have used your gifts to lighten and enrich the lives of your fellow man. In your hands ... is the future of your world and the fulfillment of the best qualities of your own spirit."

Robert F. Kennedy
University of California,
Berkeley, California,
October 22, 1966

"A nation never falls but by suicide."

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Journal, 1861

"But you cannot ruin a country by conserving its life. You can ruin a country only by stupidity, waste and greed."

Walter Lippmann
The New Republic, March 27, 1915

THE MOST COMMON EXCUSES FOR LETTING CHILDREN FALL BEHIND — AND THE ANSWERS

Excuse: Our nation cannot afford to increase its investments in children.

Answer: America cannot afford not to invest in children. America's Gross National Product (GNP) is far greater now than in earlier decades when we were doing far more for children. Our problem now is not national poverty but priorities. We spent more than $30 billion in 1991 to bail out savings and loan institutions (S&Ls); gave in 1991 the richest 1 percent of Americans $55 billion in *extra* tax breaks compared with 1977; and, if the Bush Administration has its way, will spend in 1991-1994, after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communism, $136 billion more on defense than we did in Ronald Reagan's first term as President.

2. Excuse: The budget deficit prevents any additional federal spending on children.

Answer: Children and their families gave up tens of billions of dollars in the 1980s in a deficit reduction war in which the Pentagon, the rich, and corporate America never were enlisted. Children did not cause the deficit and failing to invest in them will not solve it. And if we expect our children or grandchildren to be able to sustain a strong America in the future *and* pay off the deficits we have accumulated, we had better start investing in them now. Investing in children saves money later. Shortchanging children now imposes enormous costs later.

3. Excuse: Economic growth will solve the problems of families and children.

Answer: Economic growth is a necessary but not sufficient basis for improving the lives of America's families and children. In many good years as well as bad in the 1980s, key indicators of the status of children — immunization, prenatal care, homelessness, low birthweight, reports of abuse and neglect — got worse or did not improve. The number of children climbing out of poverty in years of economic growth during the 1980s was relatively small, and in each of the last three years of the recovery (1987, 1988, and 1989) the number of children younger than six who were living in poverty actually rose. We cannot count on economic growth alone to solve the tremendous gaps in millions of families' basic income — let

alone the need for prenatal care, preventive health care, shelter, family preservation and support programs, and child care.

4. Excuse: Children are in trouble because parents are irresponsible.

Answer: A few parents, in all kinds of American families and in widely different circumstances, are irresponsible. But the vast majority of parents are struggling to do the very best they can for their children under enormous pressures and often with shrinking resources. Like parents in earlier eras, parents today spend almost all of their time either at work or taking care of their children, juggling these two basic responsibilities. And even more than parents in earlier eras, many parents today must juggle near-full-time responsibilities to *both* work and family, whether in two-parent working families or single-parent families. Like parents in earlier eras, parents today need support and help from the community so they can carry out their responsibilities to their children. Yet we lag far behind all of our industrialized peers in providing the kind of community supports that make strong families possible — supports such as health care, child care, parental leave, or simply the low-key, friendly support of a nurse home visitor.

5. Excuse: Children ought to be the concern of local and state governments. This isn't an area where the federal government should play a role.

Answer: There's an enormous amount that state and city governments can do about children's health and well-being. But many of the critical tasks require national choices, national commitment, and national resources, especially in a time of state and local budget deficits. The nation's governors have recognized this by repeatedly calling for national leadership on health insurance and family income issues. A child's opportunity to grow up healthy and well-fed should not depend on what state he or she is born into, any more than on what family he or she is born into.

6. Excuse: Children's income and health are such major problems that there's nothing the states or cities can do. Only the federal government can help.

Answer: It's true that the national role in supporting children's income and health care is absolutely critical, and one key task for concerned policy makers and advocates at the state and local levels is to say so loudly and clearly to Congress and the White House. But it also is true that states and cities across the country are developing programs that work on behalf of children: Nine states provide free vaccines to all children; 30 states go beyond the federal Medicaid mandates to provide critical preventive health care to pregnant women and children; 20 states provide state funds to

supplement the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program for the needy. Thirteen states guarantee workers a parental leave with job security on the birth of a child. And cities across the country are putting together exciting family support, school improvement, prenatal care, and child care programs.

7. Excuse: We don't know what to do to save children and families. Nothing works.

Answer: Absolutely not true. We know what to do, and we know what programs work for children. Head Start, childhood immunizations, prenatal care, Job Corps, WIC, and many other programs have demonstrated results for children — and a dollar payoff for the taxpayer. And because most children's needs are modest, many programs that work do not demand massive government intervention. For most children at risk, a boost now and then or flexible help for the parents is enough. They need child care, not foster care; a check-up, not an intensive care bed; a tutor, not a guardian; a Head Start, not 12 years of special education; a scholarship, not an institutional placement.

8. Excuse: The private sector can solve these problems.

Answer: Many wonderful people in the business community, in religious congregations, in nonprofit organizations, in universities and hospitals and neighborhoods all over the country are doing a great deal for children. The private sector is indeed a critical part of any solution. But leaders from each of these sectors are clear that they do not have the resources or authority to solve the crises facing America's children and families — to raise more than 13 million children out of poverty, to provide health care for 9 million to 11 million uninsured children, to support the vast improvement of schools that is needed, or to meet other pressing needs that only government can marshal the resources to meet.

Part II

U.S. CHILDREN IN THE WORLD

Photo by Nita Winter

HOW AMERICA MEASURES UP

America's children now are being left behind children in other countries. The United States has the world's largest Gross National Product (GNP) but does not rank even in the top 15 on any of these measures that are crucial to children's health and well-being:

Children's Status	U.S. Rank
Infant mortality rate (1989) In the United States 10 babies died for every 1,000 live births. The United States ranked behind 18 other nations, including Singapore, Spain, and Ireland.	19
Mortality rate for children younger than five (1989) In the United States, 12 of 1,000 children died before their fifth birthdays. This ranks us behind a list of countries that includes Italy, Hong Kong, and Austria.	19
Low-birthweight births (1980-1988) In the United States, 7 percent of babies were born at low birthweight. Twenty-eight countries, including Portugal and Jordan, did better.	29
Proportion of one-year-olds fully immunized against polio (latest reported year) While 95 percent of U.S. one-year-olds were immunized, 16 nations had better rates. Moreover, when the U.S. nonwhite population's rate (82 percent of one-year-olds fully immunized against polio) is compared with other nations' overall rates, the United States lags behind 55 other countries, including Albania, Oman, Botswana, Jamaica, Tunisia, and Sri Lanka.	17
Number of school-age children per teacher (1986) The United States ratio (23-to-one) lagged behind 18 countries, including Libya, Lebanon, and Cuba, and tied Malta and Kuwait.	19

In studies in which a limited number of specific countries are measured against each other, the United States also consistently ranks poorly — often dead last:

Mathematical achievement of eighth-grade students (1981-1982) U.S. students' test scores were lower than those of students in Japan, Hungary, England, and eight other countries.	**12** (among 18 selected nations)
Expenditures on elementary and secondary education as a percentage of the Gross National Product (1985) The United States' spending of 4.1 percent of GNP was behind such nations as Austria, Belgium, Japan, and Italy.	**14** (among 16 selected nations)
Teen pregnancy rates (1985) U.S. teenage pregnancy rates were higher than those for teenage women in Canada, England and Wales, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden.	**6** (among six selected nations)
Teen birth rates (1986) U.S. birth rates were higher — often two to three times higher — than those in Canada and Western European nations.	**12** (among 12 selected nations)
Childhood poverty rates (1986) The U.S. poverty rate not only was far higher than the other six nations studied (Canada, England, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, and West Germany) but was more than double the average of the other six nations.	**7** (among 7 selected nations)

INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN

Our appalling record on education, health, teen pregnancy, and poverty outcomes reflects our grossly inadequate commitment to investing in children:

	Yes	No
Is the United States one of 70 nations worldwide that provide medical care and financial assistance to all pregnant women?		✗
Is the United States one of 61 nations around the world that ensure or provide basic medical care to all workers and their dependents?		✗
Is the United States one of 63 nations worldwide that provide a family allowance to workers and their children?		✗
Is the United States one of 17 industrialized nations that have paid maternity/parenting leave programs?		✗
Is the United States one of the more than 140 nations that have ratified or signed (indicating the intent to take up ratification) the international Convention on the Rights of the Child since the U.N. General Assembly approved it on November 20, 1989?		✗

Often when our nation does not make these investments, it puts us with nations whose company should embarrass us. Only the United States and South Africa among industrialized nations fail to ensure that all pregnant women and children have health insurance. The United States' companions in failing to sign or ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child are very few — most notably Iran, Iraq, Libya, Cambodia, and South Africa.

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

And the main reason our child poverty rates are so much higher than those of most of our allies and competitors is our declining investment in low-income families. In the 1980s, while the United States responded to growing inequality and poverty by exacerbating it, decreasing the anti-poverty effectiveness of its programs, five European countries increased the share of families they raised out of poverty through tax help and cash assistance.

When we measure our nation's specific programs against those of other wealthy countries, our shortfalls become even more evident:

	Health insurance for all children?	Family allowance for all families with children?	Paid parental leave?
Austria	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canada	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	Yes	Yes	Yes
Germany	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sweden	Yes	Yes	Yes
United Kingdom	Yes	Yes	Yes
United States	No	No	No

Part III

HOW ARE AMERICA'S CHILDREN DOING?

Photo by Nita Winter

THE HEALTH OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN

America's children are falling well behind the world's children in their access to health care and in their health status. By 1989 U.S. infant mortality rates lagged behind 18 other nations, including Japan, Hong Kong, Ireland, and Spain.

Immunization rates for American infants and toddlers are equally disgraceful. In many large American cities, one-half or more of infants and toddlers are not immunized fully against preventable killers and cripplers such as measles and polio. U.S. vaccination rates for all childhood diseases have been falling while most other nations' rates have been rising. In 1990, when, according to goals set by the U.S. Surgeon General, there were to be only 500 cases of measles nationally, the United States experienced 27,632 measles cases and 89 deaths. The polio immunization rate for nonwhite one-year-olds in the United States lags behind the overall rates of 55 other nations, including Albania, Botswana, Jamaica, and Sri Lanka.

Falling behind our competitors on these key child health indices is wholly avoidable. A White House Task Force on infant mortality determined in 1989 that one in four of all U.S. infant deaths and disabilities is fully preventable with well-known and cost-effective health measures such as early, comprehensive prenatal care for pregnant women. Yet nearly 25 percent of all U.S. infants are born to mothers who do not receive care early in pregnancy.

Our failure to invest in proven, preventive care incurs enormous moral, social, and economic costs. Each year, nearly 40,000 American children die before reaching their first birthdays, and 400,000 who survive will be left with lifelong disabilities such as retardation; cerebral palsy; and vision, learning, and hearing disabilities. The infant mortality gap between the United States and Japan costs the nation about $7 billion per year.

Why do America's pregnant women, infants, and children fail to get the preventive health care they need, even though such care would save money and lives? One reason is that millions of Americans live in communities where they have little access to basic health care. Despite the nation's abundance of hospitals, physicians, and other health care specialists, more than 30 million Americans live in medically underserved areas — usually rural or inner-city areas without enough doctors or clinics to see a child promptly or offer regular care. For example, the government's studies show that the recent decline in immunization rates and the 16-fold increase in measles were caused by the rapidly shrinking access of American

children to health services — not to parents' failure to use available services.

The second main reason is that millions of American children and their families have no health insurance. Between 9 million and 11 million children and 10.6 million women of childbearing age are completely uninsured, and millions of others have insurance that is inadequate, failing to cover essential services such as well-child visits, prenatal care, or immunizations.

To ensure a strong future for our nation, we must stop gambling with the lives and health of America's children. We must stop leaving our children behind the children of the industrialized world and, increasingly, behind nations in the developing world. We must make certain that all Americans have either private or public health insurance and that clinics, physicians, nurses, dentists, and other health care professionals are available to serve children and their families in all geographical areas. We must give *all* our children a good start in life, by guaranteeing that *all* mothers can get good, regular prenatal care and that *all* children can get the vaccines, the check-ups, and the prompt treatment that will start them on the road to healthy development.

Additional Facts About the Health of America's Children

Infant Mortality and Prenatal Care

- In 1989 almost 40,000 American babies — or 10 in every 1,000 born — died before reaching their first birthday.
- During the 1970s the proportion of mothers receiving late or no prenatal care improved by 3.5 percent every year. In contrast, the figure worsened by 2.5 percent annually during the 1980s.
- America's infant mortality rate of 10 deaths per 1,000 live births puts us nineteenth among the world's nations. The U.S. infant mortality rate for white babies, 8.5 per 1,000 live births in 1988, would place us only slightly higher — seventeenth. The U.S. infant mortality rate for black babies, 17.6 per 1,000 live births, ranks thirty-fourth among the world's nations, behind such countries as Cuba, Poland, and Jamaica.
- In 1988 nearly 25 percent of all U.S. infants and 40 percent of all black and Latino infants were born to mothers who did not receive prenatal care early in pregnancy.
- About 7 percent of American infants are born at low-birthweight, which places them at greater risk of death or disability. This proportion was higher in 1988 than in 1981.

The Health of Young Children

- The mortality rate for all children younger than five in the United States lags behind that for 18 other nations including Finland and Japan. An American preschooler is twice as likely to die as one in Japan.
- One in 11 U.S. children has a physical or mental disability significant enough to impair educational performance. One in 25 is sufficiently physically or mentally disabled to impair the normal daily functions of childhood.

Childhood Immunization

- The proportion of all U.S. infants and toddlers fully vaccinated against preventable disease lags behind 16 other nations including Czechoslovakia and Hungary, while the proportion of black infants fully immunized against preventable disease stands behind the overall rates of 55 other nations, including Libya and Iraq.

Access to Health Care

- One in 10 infants and one in five black infants living in the United States has no routine source of health care.

JOBS AND FAMILY INCOME

For nearly two decades most American families raising children have been squeezed by a tightening vise of lower wages and rising costs. Trying to stay afloat, parents spend more time at their jobs and commuting to their jobs and spend less time with their children. Both middle-class and low-income parents worry more and more about making ends meet and their eroding economic security. And they have become increasingly pessimistic about their children's future.

For some families, lack of work is the problem. There were 8.5 million unemployed Americans in August 1991, 2 million more than two years before. Record numbers have been unemployed so long they have exhausted their unemployment benefits. Millions of other Americans are so discouraged they no longer are counted as looking for work. Many workers without strong basic skills are virtually shut out of today's economy.

For millions more families, the problem has been the erosion in wages paid for the jobs they do hold. In 1990 the average weekly earnings of nonsupervisory workers dropped to their lowest level since 1958 (a decline of 18 percent since 1972).

Many married-couple families have tried to cope with falling wages by postponing childbearing or sending both adults into the paid work force. But these coping strategies have placed new strains on such families and forced them to bear new costs, especially for child care.

Falling wages also combined with changing social mores to increase greatly the number of single-parent families. As Benjamin Franklin wrote more than two centuries ago, "The number of marriages ... is greater in proportion to the ease and convenience of supporting a family. When families can be easily supported, more persons marry, and earlier in life."

All of these trends have had particular impact on America's young families — those families headed by someone younger than 30 — and especially young families with children. The median income of young families with children fell by 26 percent between 1973 and 1989 — a loss virtually identical to the drop in per capita personal income in the worst years of the Depression.

Young families always have struggled when starting out. But many of today's parents have to struggle harder, and they and their children are being left behind even as older and more established families as well as families without children hold their ground or prosper. Young Americans today are no less motivated, responsible, or educated than

their predecessors. But in fundamental ways, the rules of the game have changed. The economic landscape is shifting, and there are more than a few signs that this generation of young families may be the first in this country to end up worse off than its parents.

As wages fell in the 1970s and especially the 1980s, particularly for those without a college education, the proportion of young men earning enough money to support even a small family plummeted. As it did, marriage rates also dropped precipitously, as Ben Franklin would have predicted, leading to more out-of-wedlock births and single-parent families. Our nation's weak child support enforcement, lower wages for women, and lack of adequate public help in turn left the bulk of these single-parent families impoverished.

Our work places and government have failed to respond to the new needs of working families for family leave, adequate child care, and other family-supporting policies. Skyrocketing prices for housing, health care, and higher education have added to the pressures on most families with children.

In the meantime, the wealthiest Americans netted huge income gains and large tax cuts. From 1977 to 1988 the top 5 percent of American families increased their share of national after-tax income from 18.5 percent to 25.2 percent, while the share of the bottom and middle 60 percent fell from 33.7 to 29.3 percent.

As a result of all these trends operating together, one in five U.S. children (one in four infants and toddlers) now lives in a family with an income below the federal poverty level, even though most of these families have a parent who works at least part of the year (see Child Poverty section). Millions of other families are housing poor, child care poor, or higher education poor.

To solve this fundamental crisis of family economic insecurity, we must develop a range of national, state, and local policies that: improve productivity and speed up economic growth; provide basic economic security through a child tax credit for all families as proposed by the bipartisan National Commission on Children; make jobs available and make work pay so parents can earn enough to support their children, by raising the minimum wage and the Earned Income Tax Credit; improve child support enforcement; restore safety net programs; and enact a parental leave policy. Children are America's true national security, and we cannot afford to risk the potential of an entire generation or the future competitiveness of the nation by failing to invest in families' most basic needs.

Additional Facts About Jobs and Family Income

Unemployment

- From August 1989 to August 1991, as a result of the recession, the number of unemployed Americans rose from 6.5 million to 8.5 million.

- Fully 2.8 million families with children had an unemployed family member during an average month in 1990.
- If unemployment figures counted discouraged workers (those who want jobs but who have given up searching), the unemployment rate in the second quarter of 1991 would have been 7.5 percent instead of 6.8 percent.
- If unemployment figures counted discouraged workers and half of the involuntary part-time workers who cannot find full-time jobs, the unemployment rate in the second quarter of 1991 would have been 9.7 percent.

Falling Wages and Workers' Incomes

- In 1990 average hourly wages for production or nonsupervisory workers dropped to their lowest point since 1965.
- Although the economy had a record-long expansion in the 1980s, real hourly wages for production or nonsupervisory workers were lower at the end of the recovery than when it started. This was the first time on record (since government recordkeeping began in 1947) that wages fell in an economic recovery.
- Between 1970 and 1990 the median yearly incomes of men with full-time, year-round jobs plunged 27 percent for high school dropouts, 18 percent for high school graduates without college training, and 9 percent for graduates of four-year colleges.
- The value of the minimum wage has plummeted. In 1975 the earnings of a full-time, year-round worker with a minimum wage job could lift a family of three out of poverty. In 1991 a minimum-wage income came to less than 80 percent of the three-person poverty line.

Increasing Work Effort

- The proportion of workers working more than 40 hours a week jumped from 25 percent to 30 percent from 1980 to 1990.
- Between 1975 and 1988 (the most recent year available), the proportion of married mothers in the labor force leaped from 48 percent to 66 percent. More than two of three married mothers in the labor force in 1988 held full-time jobs.

Stagnating Family Incomes

- Between 1970 and 1990, real income rose only 6 percent for the median family (the family at the middle of the income distribution).

- Families with children fared even worse. Income fell 1 percent for the median family with children between 1970 and 1990, while it rose 18 percent for the median childless family. Incomes for families with children would have dropped much further if so many mothers had not entered the work force.

CHILD POVERTY

Our nation has shockingly high rates of child poverty in the midst of broader affluence. One of five children is poor — 13.4 million U.S. children. The incidence of poverty among children is twice that among adult Americans. Since 1979 the U.S. child poverty rate has increased by one-quarter even though our nation's abundance, as measured by the Gross National Product (GNP), has risen significantly. Younger children are even more likely to be poor: one in four children younger than six lives below the official poverty line ($10,419 for a family of three in 1990).

In a study of poverty among seven Western industrial nations, the United States' poverty rate was more than double the average of the other six nations studied (Canada, England, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, and West Germany). The data also showed that the United States took by far the least effective steps among the countries studied to lift children out of poverty through government help.

The impact of our nation's economic cycles on children has changed, contributing to the increases in child poverty. The recessions of the 1970s and 1980s have hit children much harder than earlier downturns, pushing children into poverty at a rate of more than 500,000 per recession year in the 1970s and 884,000 children annually in the 1980s. And in 1990, with only a few months of recession, 841,000 more children fell into poverty.

At the same time, economic recoveries have lost much of their punch for children, pulling very few out of poverty. During the 1960s growth periods lifted more than 900,000 children annually out of poverty. In the 1970s and 1980s this rate dropped to fewer than 300,000 annually. More children were pushed into poverty in 1990 alone than were lifted out during the five recovery years from 1984 to 1989 (when the number of poor children dropped by only 830,000).

Many of Americans' stereotypes of child poverty are very misleading.

- Two in three poor American children are white, Latino, Asian, or Native American. One-third of poor children are black.
- Children in female-headed families are far more likely than others to be poor. Yet more than two in five poor children live in families where the father is present. Even if there were no families headed by women in this country, we still would have

one of the highest child poverty rates among all industrialized societies.

- There are more poor American children living outside central cities than inside them.
- Most poor families with children work. Nearly two of three poor families with children had one or more workers in 1990. Poor families with children received twice as much income from work as from welfare.
- In 1989 only one in seven poor children in America was a poor black or Latino child living in a female-headed family on welfare in a central city.

From 1979 to 1987 more than one-third of the increase in the poverty rate among families with children resulted from the declining effectiveness of government cash payments in lifting such families out of poverty. Changes in the job market that left more parents unable to support their families were responsible for another one-third of the increase. Finally, the growing proportion of children living in single-parent families was the smallest major force driving child poverty rates upward.

High U.S. child poverty rates are making it far more difficult and expensive to solve a host of related social problems afflicting children, their families, and the nation. Eliminating child poverty — through jobs, more adequate wages, child support enforcement, and a refundable children's tax credit that would boost the economic security of both middle-class and poor families with children — would give the nation a huge running start on tackling the educational, health, substance abuse, crime, and other problems that now seem so daunting. And tackling child poverty is eminently affordable. In 1989, if we could have targeted new help precisely enough to raise the incomes of every poor family with children to the federal poverty line, it would have cost $28 billion. By contrast, the cost in 1991 alone of extra tax breaks for the richest 1 percent of American taxpayers added by the federal government since 1977 was $55 billion.

Additional Facts About Child Poverty

Who Is Poor?

- Nearly two-thirds of all poor families with children have only one or two children. The average number of children per poor family has fallen substantially since 1969.
- Children in young families are particularly likely to be poor. The poverty rate of all families with children headed by someone younger than 35 was 24.2 percent in 1990. By contrast, the

poverty rate of families headed by someone 35 or older was 11.7 percent.

- Nearly half of all children who joined the ranks of the poor between 1979 and 1990 were Latino.

How Deep Is Child Poverty?

- The average poor family with children had a monthly income of $615 in 1990 — more than $450 a month below the poverty threshold. Two in five poor children (43 percent) live in families with incomes of less than half the poverty line (or less than $5,210 for a family of three in 1990).
- One in 10 among all children younger than six lives below one-half the poverty line. Only one in 26 adults suffers such extreme poverty.
- Because of the depth and breadth of poverty, one in eight American children is reported to be suffering from hunger. More children are hungry in the United States than there are total children in such countries as Angola, Somalia, Haiti, Zimbabwe, El Salvador, or Cambodia.

Child Poverty, 1990

	Poverty Rate	Number of Poor Children (Thousands)
All children	20.6%	13,431
Children ages 0-3	25.0	2,940
Children ages 3-5	22.1	2,473
Children ages 6-17	19.0	7,988
(Adults	11.0	20,185)
White	15.9	8,232
Black	44.8	4,550
Latino	38.4	2,865
City	30.5	5,921
Suburb	13.3	4,094
Rural	22.9	3,416
Northeast	18.4	2,299
Midwest	18.8	2,979
South	23.8	5,283
West	19.8	2,870

Who Gets Government Help?

- If low-income families with children had received government assistance payments at the same per capita rate as the rest of the low-income population (including the elderly and adult couples without children), they would have received an additional $69 billion in 1987 — nearly four times as much as they actually received and more than enough to lift all poor families with children out of poverty.
- If just the inadequate 1979 level of government spending for cash transfer payments per low-income family with children had been maintained, rather than decreased by 21 percent, low-income families with children would have received an additional $5.2 billion in government help in 1987.

FAMILIES AND THE CRISIS IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

America's families with children face a terrible housing crisis. Home ownership, once an attainable dream for most families, is now out of reach for all but a few. According to the Census Bureau, 91 percent of married-couple families with children who currently rent can't afford to buy median-priced homes in their communities. Millions of young families are unable to buy the homes their parents owned. Between 1974 and 1987 home ownership rates fell dramatically among young families: Among families headed by parents younger than 25, the home ownership rate fell by almost one-third and among 25- to 29-year-olds it fell by almost one-fifth.

For lower income families, the housing crisis often means not only the deferral of a dream, but life in devastating conditions. In 1989 almost 5 million children and their families lived doubled-up with friends or relatives. Most of the country's 13 million poor children live with their families in housing that is overcrowded, unmanageably expensive, unstable, or dangerously substandard. In 1985 almost one in five poor households lived in housing with serious problems such as unsafe electrical systems, inadequate heat, or water leaks. And every year, as many as 2 million American children — 100,000 every night — experience homelessness.

Once families become homeless, almost every aspect of their lives suffers, creating unnecessary damage to children and cost to the nation. The health of homeless children is endangered by extreme poverty; lack of health insurance or funds to obtain health care; inadequate and uncertain diet and sleeping conditions; and shared eating, sleeping, and bathing quarters. Homelessness often interrupts or hampers a child's education because it is hard to get to school from the shelter, or because of delays in transferring school and health records or other requirements for enrollment. The trauma of homelessness can cause emotional problems for both parents and children. Families often are separated by homelessness: Family members sometimes have to split up to find shelter for everyone; and in some communities children are placed in foster care, or cannot return home from foster care because their parents live in inadequate housing or are homeless.

How have we allowed so many children to go without a safe and stable place to call home? The family housing crisis is rooted in the collision between eroding family incomes and growing housing costs. On the one hand, the economic recovery of the 1980s bypassed millions of American families with children, leaving them

unable to afford the available housing. On the other, the number of low-cost units fell because of gentrification, tax policies that encouraged the development of luxury housing and commercial real estate, and a drastic reduction in federal assistance that subsidizes housing for low-income families. By 1987 more than 10 million low-income households were competing for fewer than 7 million affordable units. The federal government has failed families by refusing to invest either in economic security for families or in affordable housing, with devastating results for the children who are ill-housed or homeless.

To provide all children with safe and decent housing, we must increase the supply of affordable housing and ensure basic economic security for families. No family should be forced to spend more than 30 percent of its income — the amount the federal government defines as affordable — to live in decent and stable housing. If we truly are to Leave No Child Behind, we must end homelessness among children, through comprehensive services to prevent homelessness and efforts to assist homeless families in returning to permanent housing.

Additional Facts About Children's Housing and Homelessness

Children and Housing

- More than six in 10 poor renters spend more than half of their incomes for housing. A typical poor family with children spends 70 percent of its income for housing, leaving them with $3.49 a day for all other expenses.
- Between 1970 and 1989 the proportion of children living in doubled-up households rose by 42 percent.
- Young families with children in particular have been hard hit by the rising costs of home ownership. In 1973 it took 23 percent of the median income of such families to carry a mortgage on the average-priced house; by 1986 the new mortgage of an average house cost a young family 51 percent of its income.
- Between 1973 and 1987 the median price of a house rose by more than 20 percent, while median family income rose by less than 1 percent. During the same period rental costs rose 13 percent faster than inflation nationwide.

Children and Homelessness

- Parents and their children now make up more than one-third of the total homeless population.
- The National Academy of Sciences estimates that at least 100,000 children go to sleep homeless every night.

Federal Programs for Affordable Housing

- Federal funds for low-income housing were cut by more than 80 percent during the 1980s, while the number of poor households in need of assistance rose dramatically.
- Only about one in four poor households now receives any housing assistance at all.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN CRISIS

Millions of children and adolescents across the country experience crises that threaten the very existence of a stable family life and endanger their emotional and, sometimes, their physical well-being. Many of these children have been abused, neglected, or abandoned. An estimated 2.5 million children were reported abused or neglected in 1990, an increase of more than 147 percent since 1979. Between 7.5 million and 9.5 million children and adolescents are in need of mental health services. The number of children in foster care increased almost 50 percent from mid-1986 to mid-1990. Each year nearly 500,000 young people run away from home or various residential settings, and more than 100,000 are "thrownaways," youths who have been told to leave and are unable to return home.

Many of these children have parents who are overwhelmed by the stress of making ends meet, are struggling with other family problems, or have assumed parenting responsibilities long before they were ready. Some families have serious alcohol or drug problems. Other families have been unable to find help for their children's special needs, despite repeated appeals for assistance. While such problems can plague families in all kinds of circumstances and at all income levels, broad trends such as growing child poverty, increasing numbers of births to unmarried teens, increasing numbers of homeless families with children, and the crack epidemic and its related violence have added to the number of families in crisis and made them even more fragile.

Many of these families can be helped to protect and nurture their children better, and many of the young people in trouble can be cared for in small community-based programs rather than in secure institutional settings. Yet, as a nation, we continue to choose remedial interventions over earlier, preventive support for families and treatment for children — at great public cost. Contrast, for example, the $1,700 average cost of providing a home visitor to aid a young mother in caring for an infant with the approximately $5,000 a year plus room and board that it costs to treat that infant if he or she is physically abused and must be placed in substitute care. Or contrast the $3,000 to $4,500 average cost of providing intensive family preservation services to a family with three children with the $10,000 annual cost of caring for even one of those children in a foster home. And all of these earlier supports cost far less than the $27,000 a year it costs on average to detain a young person in a public juvenile detention facility or the $80,000 average

cost of maintaining a seriously troubled child in a residential treatment center.

We must make a dramatic shift from government *intervention* in families after a crisis to government *investment* in families before a crisis. We know that the preventive approach works for many families, at far less cost. Michigan, a state that is implementing an intensive family preservation program for families where a child is at risk of placement into foster care, has seen a 12 percent reduction in the number of children entering into care in the counties with the new program — compared with a 29 percent increase in the counties without the program.

To preserve the potential of all children, we must create in every community a network of services to strengthen families and to give them the tools they need to support, nurture, and protect their children. We must ensure that families that need help with drug or alcohol problems can get a space in a treatment program when they ask, without a waiting list. We must ensure that public and private agencies work together so that families can get help with their multiple needs — instead of being bounced from agency to agency until the pressures explode and a child is endangered. We must ensure that a range of family preservation programs are available to families in need of them, before a child is removed from the home or other preventable damage occurs. And since even the most effective preventive programs will not succeed for 100 percent of families, we must ensure that children who cannot live with their families have access to high-quality foster homes or community-based programs that meet their special needs and recognize the importance of families to children.

Additional Facts About Children in Crisis

Abused and Neglected Children

- An average of more than three children a day died from child maltreatment from 1987 to 1990. An estimated 1,211 children died from abuse or neglect in 1990.
- The estimated 1 million children who experienced abuse or neglect in 1986 represented a 66 percent increase since 1980, according to a study conducted for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Other Children in Crisis

- At the peak of the crack crisis, as many as 375,000 infants were estimated to be born drug-exposed each year.
- An estimated two-thirds of the 3 million American children with serious emotional disturbances do not get the help they need.

- The suicide rate for young people ages 15 to 19 more than tripled between 1960 and 1988. Suicide is now the third leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 27.
- The rate at which juveniles were confined in public juvenile justice facilities increased nearly 20 percent between 1985 and 1989. Minority youths made up 60 percent of the population in these facilities.

Overloaded Public Services That Fail To Meet Children's Needs

- Only 40 percent of the children identified as maltreated in the 1986 National Incidence Study currently were known to child protective service agencies.
- A number of states are reporting significant increases in the rate of re-entry into foster care of children who had been returned to their families. The Chapin Hall Center for Children reported in 1990 that in both New York and Illinois, almost one in three of the children discharged home from foster care in 1986 later returned to care.
- Nationwide, only about 300 shelters for runaway and homeless youths are assisted by federal programs. The capacity of these shelters falls far short of meeting the need, and the 15-day limit on stays in the shelters pushes many young people onto the streets.

ADOLESCENTS IN TROUBLE: PREGNANCY, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, VIOLENCE, AND VICTIMIZATION

Far too many American teens are poor and unhealthy; unsafe in their homes, their neighborhoods, and their schools; experimenting with drugs or alcohol; risking pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease through too-early sexual activity; and written off as unsalvageable by their schools. Some 580,000 teenagers use marijuana once a week or more, and about 8 million junior and senior high school students drink alcohol weekly. And *every day* seven teenagers are the victims of homicide; 8,441 teenagers become sexually active; 1,340 teenagers have a baby; and 4,901 teenagers are the victims of violent crime.

American girls are about twice as likely to become teenage parents as teens in other industrialized countries. One million American teenagers — roughly the entire population of Detroit, Michigan — got pregnant in 1988, and about half of those teens bore a child. The majority of teen births are to unmarried young women, and the birth rates for unmarried teens continue to rise.

Teen mothers are less likely than other mothers to receive adequate prenatal care, more likely to have low-birthweight infants (which is associated with a greater likelihood of infant death or disability), less likely than other young women to continue their educations beyond high school, and more likely than other mothers to bring up their children in poverty.

These statistics are especially troubling because, while today's teenagers are a lot like yesterday's teenagers, the world around them has changed drastically. As a result, the sexual activity, experimentation, and risky choices that often have characterized adolescence have far more serious consequences today. Dropping out of school, for example, increasingly places a teenager at risk of dead-end jobs and poverty as an adult. Early sexual activity not only risks too-early pregnancy and parenthood, with far greater economic consequences than ever before, but also AIDS.

As a nation we cannot afford to lose a single adolescent on the road to adulthood, as demographic changes make adolescents and young adults an increasingly scarce resource. There will be 2 million fewer 18- to 24-year-olds in 1995 than in 1990, and in 1990 we had almost 3 million fewer than we did in 1985. Black, Latino, Asian, and other minority young people — who are on average more likely to be disadvantaged in a variety of ways — will make up an increasing proportion of these young people: almost one-third of young adults will be from minority groups in 1995, compared with less than one-quarter in 1985.

There is no mystery about how to avoid the waste of so many young people's potential. The experience of effective programs for teens demonstrates that we need to provide a comprehensive web of community supports, with the family at the center, that addresses six key areas: education and strong basic skills; a range of non-academic opportunities for success; links to caring adults who provide positive role models, values, and support for teens; family life education and life planning; comprehensive adolescent health services; and a basic standard of living for all teens and their families. With these supports, we can bolster the motivation and capacity of teens to make wise choices about their futures and avoid too-early sexual activity and pregnancy, substance abuse, crime, and violence.

Additional Facts About Teenagers and the Transition to Adulthood

Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing

- About one in 10 15- to 19-year-old women gets pregnant each year.
- Of all mothers in the United States having their first child in 1988, almost one in four were teenagers.
- Almost two-thirds of all births to teens are to unmarried girls, compared with less than one-third in 1970.
- Fewer than six of 10 adolescent mothers will obtain their high school diplomas by age 29. And each year at least 40,000 teenage girls drop out of school due to pregnancy.
- For almost half of the births to teenagers in 1988, the mother did not receive early prenatal care.

Violence, Crime, and Victimization

- Homicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents and young people ages 15 to 24. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause, and suicides are third.
- Almost 1.8 million teenagers were the victims of violent crimes in 1988.
- Low-income teenagers are more likely to be the victims of violence than other teens.

Substance Abuse

- Alcohol use among teens begins early and is widespread. More than 30 percent of high school seniors say they are binge drinkers, defined as having five drinks or more in a row in the preceding two weeks. Teenage drinkers start drinking, on average, at about age 13.

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

- While self-reported drug use among teenagers dropped substantially from 1985 to 1990, almost one-quarter of surveyed 12- to 17-year-olds in 1990 reported having used illicit drugs (drugs other than alcohol and tobacco).

Family Income and Earnings

- A total of 3.2 million 12- to 17-year-olds live in poverty — equal to the entire population of Albania or Costa Rica.
- Many teens and young adults have difficulty earning enough to support a family. The median hourly wage of 16- to 24-year-old men plummeted 24 percent between 1979 and 1989.

YOUNG CHILDREN AND SCHOOL READINESS

The path to high school graduation begins before birth. A well-nourished and healthy mother who has received regular prenatal care gives her infant the best start possible. In the infant and toddler years, a youngster needs good nutrition and health, a strong and nurturing family, and the varied and rich early childhood experiences that will encourage rather than stifle curiosity and eagerness to learn. By the time the child is three or four years old, some of those experiences are likely to be taking place outside the home, in a child care home or center or a preschool, and those experiences as well should be safe, loving, and stimulating.

In 1990, recognizing that these early childhood experiences are crucial to success in school and after, President Bush and the governors named school readiness for all young children the first of six national education goals. Yet available indicators of the well-being of young children show how woefully far we are from reaching the goal.

Young children are the poorest Americans. Almost one in four American children younger than six lived in a family with income below the poverty line in 1990, and more than one in 10 in a family with income less than one-half of the poverty line. Living in dire poverty means that children's nutrition and health care too often are traded off against paying the rent or the heat: after paying the rent a typical poor family with children has an average of $3.49 per day left to spend on all other needs.

Very modest investments during the early years have been shown to save much larger sums later on. Every $1 spent on high-quality preschool education saves an estimated $4.75 in later special education, crime, welfare, and other costs. Yet Head Start, which Congress and the Bush Administration promised full funding by 1994, has funding to serve fewer than one in three eligible children in 1991.

Our communities, our work places, and our nation offer little support for parents engaged in the extraordinarily difficult task of caring for young children. Unlike virtually all of our Western European competitors, the United States has no parental leave policy (paid or unpaid) to allow parents to stay home with an infant without jeopardizing their jobs and income. Unlike those same nations, we have failed to ensure the availability of high-quality, affordable child care. Although 61 percent of mothers with children ages three to five were in the labor force by the end of the 1980s, the National

Research Council concluded in 1990 that "Poor ... quality [child] care threatens children's development, especially children from poor and minority families."

Our continued failure to attend to the well-being of young children is not only a tragic waste of their potential but a gamble with our nation's economic future. Among our major competitors, the United States stands out for the paucity of its efforts to ensure that all of its children enter school healthy, strong, intellectually curious, and emotionally secure. We must commit ourselves to each of the steps required to meet that goal: to an economic base for families with young children that enables them to meet children's basic needs; to paid parental leave policies that enable parents to care for an infant without jeopardizing the family's income; to a place in Head Start for every eligible child, as promised by President Bush and Congress; to high-quality and affordable child care available in

Community Programs That Support Families

Parents and family are the first and most crucial influence in the lives of most young children. A study of high-risk children in Hawaii found that the strength of the mother-child relationship in the early years was a key determinant of whether the children were "resilient," or able to overcome their disadvantage to succeed as adolescents. Recognizing this link, one of the three objectives under the National Education Goal for School Readiness is that all parents will be their children's first teachers.

Yet parents today are struggling. Many families cope with the economic squeeze by sending both parents into the work force. Many parents are isolated, without strong ties to their neighborhood and with few kin to call on when they feel overwhelmed. And a growing number of single parents face the pressure of trying to be both nurturer and provider.

Supporting parents to cope with these stresses and respond more fully to their children's needs is a commonsense and cost-effective way to help children. Across the country, promising community programs — generally called family resource, family support, or parent education programs — are springing up to do just that. Research and experience suggest that such programs can make a difference to children's lives:

- The statewide home visitor program known as Parents as Teachers in Missouri lessened or resolved poor parental coping skills and family stress for more than half of

all communities for all children; to community programs that help support parents in providing a secure and stimulating environment for their children's development; and to universally available child health services. Otherwise, the battle for an educated and economically secure future is lost before it is begun.

Additional Facts About Young Children and School Readiness

Young Children and Their Families

- In 1988 more than half of all children younger than six had mothers who worked outside the home, and the majority of those mothers worked full-time. By 1995 two-thirds of all preschool children will have mothers in the work force.

the families served, according to an independent evaluation released in 1991. More than one-half of the children with observed developmental delays in the study sample overcame them by age three.

- In Denmark and England, among other countries, all parents can rely on well-developed and easily accessible systems of maternal and child health home visitors or local clinics to offer low-key advice and help when a child is born.
- The network of Family Support Centers established in Maryland has helped meet the challenges of very high-risk young single parents in the state. An early evaluation of the centers documented their positive impact on parents' education and employment, and on family stability. They offer young families help in reaching out for better lives and better opportunities for their children.
- The HIPPY Program (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters) uses trained paraprofessional parents from the communities served to assist mothers (who are themselves educationally disadvantaged) in the preparation of their four- and five-year-old children for school. Studies from Israel, where the program originated, have documented the program's positive impact on children's later school performance, as well as on parental interest in their children's and their own education and advancement.

- Without parental leave, parents are forced either to return to work during the critical early months of infancy or to lose income and perhaps lose their jobs. A recent study found that the annual earnings of women without job-protected leave dropped 29 percent the first year after having a baby, compared with only an 18 percent drop for women with job-protected leave.

Early Childhood Education and Child Care

- High-quality early childhood programs cost $4,000 to $5,000 a year for a four-year-old child and can cost considerably more for infants and children with special needs. Without assistance, such costs are well beyond the reach of low- and moderate-income families and impose a considerable burden on many middle-income families.
- According to the National Research Council, poor-quality care is a significant threat to the development of poor children, despite the fact that their parents are paying an average of 25 percent of their income for child care.
- High-quality early childhood education programs have demonstrated major long-term benefits for children. The well-known longitudinal study of the Perry Preschool Program revealed that program participants by their late teens were more likely than those in a control group to have graduated from high school or to be employed or in some post-high school education program. They also had fewer pregnancies and fewer and less serious dealings with the criminal justice system.

THE EDUCATION OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN

Too many American children are not getting an education that will enable them to take their places as productive citizens in an increasingly complex work place and society. At a time when jobs demand ever higher levels of basic skills, more than 400,000 young people ages 16 to 19 dropped out of school during the 1989-1990 school year. Almost 30 percent of the students who entered high school in 1984 did not graduate four years later.

Far too many children who remain in school are not learning what they need to know. Among 17-year-olds who still are in school, only half can compute using decimals, fractions, and percents; fewer than half can understand, summarize, and explain the kind of material found in encyclopedias or high school texts. In a 1988 international assessment of math achievement, American 13-year-olds ranked last in ability to solve math problems — behind 13-year-olds in the United Kingdom, Spain, Ireland, Korea, and three Canadian provinces.

Recognizing the importance of providing a first-rate education for all children, President Bush and the governors adopted standards for educational excellence: the National Goals for Education, introduced in 1990 to be achieved by the year 2000. These goals focus on school readiness; high school completion; student achievement and citizenship; science and mathematics accomplishment; adult literacy and lifelong learning; and disciplined and drug-free schools.

But it will take dramatic action to achieve these goals. The school completion goal for the year 2000 — that 90 percent of American children will graduate from high school — will not be achieved until two decades later if current trends are allowed to continue unaltered.

Even more than for other children, the educational experience of low-income and minority children often falls short of what it would take to reach the goals. These students' exposure to qualified teachers, innovative teaching methods, advanced courses, and high-quality textbooks and teaching materials is limited at best and nonexistent at worst. In 1987 white high school graduates were twice as likely to have taken trigonometry as black and Latino high school graduates. And despite compelling evidence that grade retention increases the likelihood of school dropout, more than one in four black eighth-graders and almost one in four Latino eighth-graders have repeated at least one grade.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the achievement levels, school completion rates, and rates of high school graduates' entry into higher education for low-income and minority students lag behind those of more advantaged children. To a significant degree, minorities' lesser educational achievement is tied to their higher poverty rates. The 1987 high school dropout rate for poor youths ages 18 to 21 was more than twice the dropout rate for nonpoor students of the same age.

Yet the need for a first-rate education for *all* of our children never has been greater. In an increasingly knowledge-driven economy, only those young people with a college education are earning as much as their peers a generation ago. And as adults, today's youngsters will be supporting the largest-ever American senior citizen population, giving all of us a stake in their productivity.

To make the National Education Goals a reality, we must act now to ensure that every school provides a first-rate education through a rich and challenging curriculum. We must ensure that children who need special or additional resources receive them; that the schools that serve these children have more — not less — access to the best teachers, the best equipment and teaching materials, and the most effective support services; that the teaching profession is given the support and training to be held accountable for results; that class size is reduced significantly in areas serving children with special needs; and that parents and communities become partners with the schools in educating children.

Additional Facts About the Education of America's Children

Overall Achievement Levels

- Even in schools in the top one-third of math achievement, only 10 percent of seniors are able to solve problems involving geometry, algebra, and beginning statistics.
- Among American 13-year-olds, 27 percent cannot add, subtract, multiply, and divide using whole numbers; and 42 percent cannot search for specific information, interrelate ideas, and make generalizations about something they have just read.

The Educational Experience of Low-Income and Minority Students

- In 1986 almost one-third of black and Latino students attended schools in which 90 percent or more of the students were from minority groups.
- In 1988 only about 25 percent of black and Latino 17-year-olds were at or above the expected level of proficiency in reading, science, and math.

- Forty-four percent of black students and 32 percent of Latino students ages 18 and 19 are enrolled two or more years behind the modal grade. Only 8 percent of white students of the same age are two or more years behind.

Access to Educational Services

- Chapter 1 — a $6 billion federal program that helps local school districts serve economically and educationally disadvantaged students — is a proven, cost-effective way to promote adequate basic skills through preventive investment. It now serves only three of five eligible children.
- According to estimates from the Department of Education, only a small fraction of the millions of students with limited English proficiency are getting bilingual education.

High School Completion

- The long-term trend of increasing high school completion rates has flattened out in the 1980s. In fact, the percentage of young adults (18- to 24-year-olds) who are high school graduates *decreased* from 1985 to 1988 — from 82.4 percent to 81.2 percent.
- In 1988 only 55 percent of Latino young adults (18- to 24-year-olds) were high school graduates.

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

Part IV

CHILDREN IN AMERICA'S STATES AND CITIES

Photo by Rick Reinhard

CHILDREN IN AMERICA'S STATES AND CITIES

Legislators, candidates, journalists, advocates, and others who care about children in America should understand the circumstances of children in their states. For those states whose children are doing badly compared with others on the key indicators of childhood well-being — infant mortality rate, poverty, on-time high school completion, and others — these tables clearly issue a call to action. They offer powerful evidence that the extreme distress of children in some states is not inevitable.

Yet for those states whose children are doing relatively well compared with other states, these comparisons must not lead to complacency. If we use benchmarks such as our ability to meet children's basic needs or to equal other countries or previous generations, then children in every state have fallen behind. For example, in no state can a poor family find or rent affordable housing. Only one state currently boasts a high school completion rate at the level proposed by the nation's education goals. In no state will the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) grant lift a family of three out of poverty. In no state and in none of the nation's largest cities is the infant mortality rate as low as the national rate in Japan.

In all of the United States, children are unnecessarily dying, going hungry, suffering, and being left behind. In some states, children also are being left behind their peers in other states.

In the District of Columbia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama, more than 12 infants died in 1988 for every 1,000 born — a rate 20 percent worse than the national average and higher than the infant mortality rates of Czechoslovakia and Greece. In Nebraska, Michigan, Delaware, Illinois, and the District of Columbia, more than 20 black infants died for every 1,000 born — a rate higher than the overall infant mortality rates of Cuba and Chile. While three-quarters of American infants across the country were born to mothers with early prenatal care, only a little more than half of the births in New Mexico and about two-thirds in South Carolina, Texas, and Arizona were to mothers with early care. And while nationwide about two-thirds of births to teens were to unmarried teens, in 10 states and the District of Columbia — states spread out geographically from Maryland to Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey to Minnesota and Wisconsin — a full three-quarters or more of teen births occurred outside of marriage.

Children in all the states are failing to graduate from high school, and children are growing up in poverty. Nationwide, an

estimated 70 percent of the public high school class of 1988 graduated on time, but fewer than 60 percent of Florida's class did so. And while about one in five children was poor in the United States as a whole over the period 1983-1987, close to one in three children was poor in Mississippi, Alabama, the District of Columbia, Louisiana, and West Virginia.

States can and must act on behalf of children. Only a few of the actions states can take are measured in these tables. Other steps that are not included because the data are not as easily summarized — steps such as providing free and universally available vaccines, supporting high-quality early childhood programs, or strengthening child support collections — are equally critical.

To promote children's healthy development, states can choose to provide health insurance coverage for all pregnant women and infants with incomes up to 185 percent of the poverty line and receive federal funds for 50 percent to 77 percent of the cost through the Medicaid program. Further, states can and should (as several have done) go beyond the limits of federal reimbursement to provide critically needed health coverage to all low-income and uninsured children. Despite state concerns that expanded coverage for children would exhaust available state funds, the table on page 68 shows that in FY 1990 children made up only 14 percent of combined federal and state expenditures under the Medicaid program — even though they made up 45 percent of the recipients.

To meet the basic needs of all children, states need to provide job opportunities for parents and strengthen child support collection so that every child has the support of two parents. In addition, for the poorest families, states need to set benefits under AFDC at a level that enables parents to provide their children with food, clothing, and shelter. Yet in 10 states, the maximum benefit for a family of three currently is set at less than *one-third* of the poverty line — at levels ranging from $120 per month in Mississippi to $280 per month in Georgia.

States must choose to invest in the education of all children, for the sake of the children themselves and the states' economic futures. On average, states increased their per-pupil spending on primary and secondary education by 25 percent (adjusted for inflation) from 1979-1980 to 1987-1988, but individual state performance ranged from a 0.7 percent *decrease* in per-pupil spending in Utah to a 75 percent increase in Vermont.

INFANT MORTALITY,[1] 1988

	Number of Infant Deaths	Infant Mortality Rate[2]	Infant Mortality Rank
Alabama	736	12.1	46
Alaska	130	11.6	44
Arizona	637	9.7	25
Arkansas	374	10.7	35
California	4,573	8.6	12
Colorado	510	9.6	24
Connecticut	426	8.9	17
Delaware	123	11.8	45
District of Columbia	245	23.2	51
Florida	1,952	10.6	34
Georgia	1,331	12.6	50
Hawaii	137	7.2	2
Idaho	138	8.8	16
Illinois	2,083	11.3	42
Indiana	899	11.0	39
Iowa	331	8.7	14
Kansas	309	8.0	6
Kentucky	544	10.7	35
Louisiana	814	11.0	39
Maine	136	7.9	4
Maryland	854	11.3	42
Massachusetts	695	7.9	4
Michigan	1,544	11.1	41
Minnesota	521	7.8	3
Mississippi	516	12.3	47
Missouri	773	10.1	30
Montana	102	8.7	14
Nebraska	215	9.0	19
Nevada	152	8.4	10
New Hampshire	144	8.3	9
New Jersey	1,168	9.9	27
New Mexico	270	10.0	29
New York	3,017	10.8	37
North Carolina	1,215	12.5	49
North Dakota	106	10.5	33
Ohio	1,565	9.7	25
Oklahoma	429	9.0	19
Oregon	343	8.6	12
Pennsylvania	1,643	9.9	27
Rhode Island	116	8.2	8
South Carolina	677	12.3	47
South Dakota	113	10.1	30
Tennessee	761	10.8	37
Texas	2,724	9.0	19
Utah	287	8.0	6
Vermont	55	6.8	1
Virginia	967	10.4	32
Washington	654	9.0	19
West Virginia	197	9.0	19
Wisconsin	595	8.4	10
Wyoming	64	8.9	17
United States total	38,910	10.0	

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States: 1988, Vol. II—Mortality, Part A* (1991), Tables 2-8 and 2-11. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

[1]Deaths of infants under one year of age.

[2]Deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births.

INFANT MORTALITY RATE,[1] BY RACE, 1988

	White	Rank	Black	Rank	Black-White Ratio
Alabama	9.3	39	17.2	15	1.8
Alaska	9.8	47	—	—	—
Arizona	9.4	41	17.9	20	1.9
Arkansas	8.7	28	17.4	16	2.0
California	8.2	16	15.9	7	1.9
Colorado	9.6	42	12.0	1	1.3
Connecticut	8.0	11	15.5	6	1.9
Delaware	9.1	37	21.1	32	2.3
District of Columbia	19.9	51	26.0	35	1.3
Florida	8.5	21	17.4	16	2.0
Georgia	9.2	38	18.9	26	2.1
Hawaii	7.2	3	—	—	—
Idaho	8.5	21	—	—	—
Illinois	8.7	28	20.7	31	2.4
Indiana	9.9	48	19.9	30	2.0
Iowa	8.3	18	—	—	—
Kansas	7.0	2	16.5	13	2.4
Kentucky	10.0	49	17.4	16	1.7
Louisiana	9.0	35	14.3	4	1.6
Maine	8.0	11	—	—	—
Maryland	8.5	21	17.8	19	2.1
Massachusetts	7.3	5	15.4	5	2.1
Michigan	8.6	26	21.9	33	2.5
Minnesota	7.2	3	19.5	27	2.7
Mississippi	8.7	28	16.1	9	1.9
Missouri	9.0	35	16.2	11	1.8
Montana	8.8	32	—	—	—
Nebraska	8.1	13	22.4	34	2.8
Nevada	7.5	6	18.7	25	2.5
New Hampshire	8.4	20	—	—	—
New Jersey	7.9	9	18.5	23	2.3
New Mexico	9.7	45	—	—	—
New York	8.9	34	18.1	22	2.0
North Carolina	9.6	42	19.5	27	2.0
North Dakota	10.0	49	—	—	—
Ohio	8.6	26	15.9	7	1.8
Oklahoma	9.3	39	12.6	2	1.4
Oregon	8.5	21	—	—	—
Pennsylvania	8.1	13	19.8	29	2.4
Rhode Island	7.5	6	—	—	—
South Carolina	9.6	42	16.6	14	1.7
South Dakota	9.7	45	—	—	—
Tennessee	8.2	16	18.6	24	2.3
Texas	8.3	18	14.2	3	1.7
Utah	7.9	9	—	—	—
Vermont	6.7	1	—	—	—
Virginia	8.1	13	17.9	20	2.2
Washington	8.7	28	16.1	9	1.9
West Virginia	8.5	21	—	—	—
Wisconsin	7.5	6	16.4	12	2.2
Wyoming	8.8	32	—	—	—
United States total	8.5		17.6		2.1

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States: 1988, Vol. II—Mortality, Part A* (1991), Tables 2-8 and 2-11. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

[1]Deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 live births.

—Number too small to calculate a reliable rate.

BABIES BORN TO MOTHERS RECEIVING EARLY PRENATAL CARE,[1] 1988

	Number of Births	Percent of All Births	Rank
Alabama	43,901	73.1%	42
Alaska	8,781	79.3	20
Arizona	43,483	67.9	47
Arkansas	22,857	68.3	46
California	395,839	75.3	35
Colorado	40,913	77.4	27
Connecticut	34,764	83.1	5
Delaware	8,267	79.7	18
District of Columbia	6,393	61.2	50
Florida	128,158	70.1	45
Georgia	76,244	73.3	41
Hawaii	13,622	76.6	30
Idaho	11,322	74.8	36
Illinois	143,374	78.1	25
Indiana	62,242	78.2	24
Iowa	32,203	85.4	1
Kansas	30,929	81.6	11
Kentucky	38,633	76.7	29
Louisiana	54,655	74.3	38
Maine	14,043	82.8	7
Maryland	58,647	81.2	13
Massachusetts	71,335	83.4	4
Michigan	110,645	79.9	16
Minnesota	47,738	79.8	17
Mississippi	31,675	75.9	32
Missouri	60,030	79.2	21
Montana	8,950	77.7	26
Nebraska	19,627	82.4	9
Nevada	12,950	72.0	43
New Hampshire	14,402	84.1	2
New Jersey	90,811	79.7	18
New Mexico	13,792	54.9	51
New York	198,170	74.8	36
North Carolina	73,564	75.7	33
North Dakota	8,193	81.9	10
Ohio	128,387	81.6	11
Oklahoma	31,996	73.6	40
Oregon	29,500	73.9	39
Pennsylvania	128,803	78.9	22
Rhode Island	11,840	84.0	3
South Carolina	35,326	64.7	49
South Dakota	8,541	76.6	30
Tennessee	52,347	75.5	34
Texas	198,187	66.9	48
Utah	29,223	82.6	8
Vermont	6,205	80.6	15
Virginia	74,410	80.7	14
Washington	53,917	77.1	28
West Virginia	15,185	71.2	44
Wisconsin	58,644	83.1	5
Wyoming	5,552	78.4	23
United States total	2,899,215	75.9%	

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States, 1988, Vol. I—Natality* (1990), Table 1-91. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

[1]Care received during the first three months of pregnancy.

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN MEDICAID, FY 1990

	Children as Percent of Total Recipients	Expenditures for Children as a Percent of Total Expenditures
Alabama	34.8%	11.0%
Alaska	57.3	31.3
Arizona	—	—
Arkansas	31.8	10.6
California	43.1	15.3
Colorado	42.5	11.5
Connecticut	58.0	11.9
Delaware	63.4	18.2
District of Columbia	48.6	10.2
Florida	43.8	16.4
Georgia	41.6	14.2
Hawaii	48.0	15.1
Idaho	45.1	11.2
Illinois	51.0	15.3
Indiana	44.7	12.5
Iowa	40.1	13.8
Kansas	46.1	16.6
Kentucky	34.9	12.2
Louisiana	47.8	20.2
Maine	39.5	10.1
Maryland	47.5	16.9
Massachusetts	36.8	8.2
Michigan	50.4	17.2
Minnesota	47.3	11.4
Mississippi	48.1	16.8
Missouri	42.7	16.1
Montana	38.2	10.4
Nebraska	42.7	13.2
Nevada	42.0	12.9
New Hampshire	44.2	6.5
New Jersey	46.9	10.2
New Mexico	48.9	16.9
New York	43.9	10.8
North Carolina	43.3	18.9
North Dakota	38.0	9.9
Ohio	52.0	18.6
Oklahoma	44.4	18.4
Oregon	48.9	14.7
Pennsylvania	45.7	16.5
Rhode Island	39.4	7.3
South Carolina	41.5	15.0
South Dakota	43.7	13.5
Tennessee	44.2	20.3
Texas	50.1	17.8
Utah	45.6	13.5
Vermont	42.8	9.8
Virginia	43.2	13.1
Washington	44.8	14.7
West Virginia	41.9	10.6
Wisconsin	40.4	8.7
Wyoming	52.2	22.2
United States total	45.0%	14.0%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Care Financing Administration, *Medicaid: Medical Care Provided by Title XIX of the Social Security Act* (1991), Tables 2 and 10. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

—Arizona did not participate in the Medicaid program.

BIRTHS TO TEENAGE WOMEN,[1] 1988

	Number of Births to Teens	Number of Births to Unmarried Teens	Percent of All Births to Teens	Rank of Percent
Alabama	10,597	6,463	61.0%	12
Alaska	1,049	657	62.6	15
Arizona	9,059	6,177	68.2	31
Arkansas	6,606	3,719	56.3	9
California	58,950	38,306	65.0	24
Colorado	5,690	3,651	64.2	19
Connecticut	4,124	3,239	78.5	46
Delaware	1,329	1,002	75.4	40
District of Columbia	1,854	1,755	94.7	51
Florida	25,292	16,882	66.7	28
Georgia	17,457	11,209	64.2	19
Hawaii	1,786	1,247	69.8	35
Idaho	1,827	833	45.6	1
Illinois	23,183	18,406	79.4	48
Indiana	11,488	7,213	62.8	16
Iowa	3,541	2,428	68.6	33
Kansas	4,416	2,580	58.4	11
Kentucky	8,827	4,310	48.8	3
Louisiana	12,381	8,766	70.8	36
Maine	1,864	1,204	64.6	23
Maryland	8,451	6,904	81.7	50
Massachusetts	7,273	5,710	78.5	46
Michigan	17,460	10,921	62.5	14
Minnesota	4,857	3,702	76.2	42
Mississippi	8,704	6,250	71.8	39
Missouri	10,456	6,804	65.1	25
Montana	1,156	772	66.8	29
Nebraska	2,213	1,554	70.2	36
Nevada	2,252	1,107	49.2	5
New Hampshire	1,301	809	62.2	13
New Jersey	10,515	8,555	81.4	49
New Mexico	4,248	2,911	68.5	32
New York	26,487	20,302	76.6	44
North Carolina	15,629	9,872	63.2	17
North Dakota	765	501	65.5	26
Ohio	21,738	15,368	70.7	37
Oklahoma	7,581	4,013	52.9	8
Oregon	4,578	2,906	63.5	18
Pennsylvania	18,137	13,921	76.8	45
Rhode Island	1,458	1,105	75.8	41
South Carolina	9,248	6,403	69.2	34
South Dakota	1,191	804	67.5	30
Tennessee	12,153	7,088	58.3	10
Texas	46,113	22,576	49.0	4
Utah	3,358	1,602	47.7	2
Vermont	722	466	64.5	22
Virginia	10,428	6,697	64.2	19
Washington	7,653	5,096	66.6	27
West Virginia	3,688	1,881	51.0	6
Wisconsin	6,950	5,314	76.5	43
Wyoming	858	445	51.9	7
United States total	488,941	322,406	65.9%	

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States: 1988, Vol. I—Natality* (1990), Tables 1-60, 1-61, and 1-77. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

[1]A more complete picture of the status of teens would include teen pregnancies as well as teen births. However, we were unable to include teen pregnancies in this table because reliable figures at the state level are not available.

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

CURRENT EXPENDITURE PER PUPIL IN AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, 1987-88, AND PERCENT CHANGE SINCE 1979-1980 (ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION)

	Expenditure	Rank	Change	Rank
Alabama	$2,718	48	13.0%	45
Alaska	7,971	1	13.0	45
Arizona	3,744	34	27.3	22
Arkansas	2,989	47	27.2	23
California	3,840	31	13.5	42
Colorado	4,462	16	23.5	28
Connecticut	6,230	4	72.5	2
Delaware	5,017	11	17.5	37
District of Columbia	6,132	5	26.1	25
Florida	4,092	25	45.2	5
Georgia	3,434	39	41.6	6
Hawaii	3,919	29	13.1	44
Idaho	2,667	49	7.7	48
Illinois	4,369	19	13.2	43
Indiana	3,794	32	35.1	11
Iowa	4,124	24	18.8	35
Kansas	4,076	26	25.7	26
Kentucky	3,011	46	18.6	36
Louisiana	3,138	43	17.4	38
Maine	4,258	20	56.5	3
Maryland	5,201	9	34.2	13
Massachusetts	5,471	6	30.0	18
Michigan	4,692	15	19.1	34
Minnesota	4,386	18	23.1	29
Mississippi	2,548	50	2.6	50
Missouri	3,786	33	31.0	16
Montana	4,246	21	14.9	40
Nebraska	3,943	28	22.9	30
Nevada	3,623	36	16.3	39
New Hampshire	4,457	17	55.9	4
New Jersey	6,564	3	37.8	9
New Mexico	3,691	35	21.6	32
New York	7,151	2	38.4	8
North Carolina	3,368	41	28.6	20
North Dakota	3,519	38	22.8	31
Ohio	3,998	27	29.1	19
Oklahoma	3,093	44	7.6	49
Oregon	4,789	13	19.2	33
Pennsylvania	4,989	12	31.9	15
Rhode Island	5,329	7	37.3	10
South Carolina	3,408	40	30.4	17
South Dakota	3,249	42	14.1	41
Tennessee	3,068	45	25.7	26
Texas	3,608	37	26.2	24
Utah	2,454	51	-0.7	51
Vermont	5,207	8	74.7	1
Virginia	4,149	23	41.1	7
Washington	4,164	22	8.7	47
West Virginia	3,858	30	34.7	12
Wisconsin	4,747	14	28.4	21
Wyoming	5,051	10	34.0	14
United States total	$4,243		25.2%	

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 1990* (1991), Table 155. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATIO,[1] 1988

	Percent	Rank
Alabama	74.9%	23
Alaska	65.5	43
Arizona	61.1	48
Arkansas	77.2	17
California	65.9	42
Colorado	74.7	24
Connecticut	84.9	7
Delaware	71.7	33
District of Columbia	58.2	50
Florida	58.0	51
Georgia	61.0	49
Hawaii	69.1	38
Idaho	75.4	22
Illinois	75.6	21
Indiana	76.3	19
Iowa	85.8	5
Kansas	80.2	9
Kentucky	69.0	39
Louisiana	61.4	47
Maine	74.4	25
Maryland	74.1	27
Massachusetts	74.4	25
Michigan	73.6	30
Minnesota	90.9	1
Mississippi	66.9	40
Missouri	74.0	29
Montana	87.3	4
Nebraska	85.4	6
Nevada	75.8	20
New Hampshire	74.1	27
New Jersey	77.4	15
New Mexico	71.9	32
New York	62.3	46
North Carolina	66.7	41
North Dakota	88.3	2
Ohio	79.6	10
Oklahoma	71.7	33
Oregon	73.0	31
Pennsylvania	78.4	14
Rhode Island	69.8	36
South Carolina	64.6	45
South Dakota	79.6	10
Tennessee	69.3	37
Texas	65.3	44
Utah	79.4	12
Vermont	78.7	13
Virginia	71.6	35
Washington	77.1	18
West Virginia	77.3	16
Wisconsin	84.9	7
Wyoming	88.3	2
United States average	71.2%	

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation, *State Education Performance Chart: Student Performance, Resource Inputs, State Reforms, and Population Characteristics, 1982 and 1988* (1990), Columns 13 and 14.

[1]Ratio of number of public high school graduates to number of public school ninth graders four years earlier, adjusted for migration and for unclassified students.

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

POVERTY AMONG RELATED CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18, AVERAGE FOR 1983-1987

	Number of Poor Children	Estimated Percent of All Children	Rank
Alabama	348,000	31.7%	50
Alaska	21,000	12.7	3
Arizona	183,000	21.2	32
Arkansas	192,000	29.0	46
California	1,512,000	21.4	35
Colorado	131,000	16.2	16
Connecticut	86,000	11.8	2
Delaware	24,000	15.3	10
District of Columbia	39,000	31.3	49
Florida	575,000	21.1	31
Georgia	381,000	24.2	43
Hawaii	46,000	16.7	19
Idaho	67,000	21.7	36
Illinois	730,000	22.8	38
Indiana	259,000	18.4	23
Iowa	170,000	21.3	33
Kansas	96,000	14.5	7
Kentucky	238,000	23.6	41
Louisiana	390,000	30.6	48
Maine	48,000	16.0	14
Maryland	133,000	13.0	4
Massachusetts	204,000	14.1	6
Michigan	564,000	22.7	37
Minnesota	186,000	16.3	17
Mississippi	257,000	34.3	51
Missouri	268,000	20.5	29
Montana	48,000	20.1	27
Nebraska	86,000	18.7	25
Nevada	39,000	15.2	9
New Hampshire	15,000	6.2	1
New Jersey	288,000	15.5	11
New Mexico	117,000	27.5	45
New York	1,031,000	23.6	41
North Carolina	294,000	19.5	26
North Dakota	33,000	16.4	18
Ohio	581,000	20.2	28
Oklahoma	188,000	21.0	30
Oregon	121,000	17.7	22
Pennsylvania	516,000	18.4	23
Rhode Island	38,000	16.7	19
South Carolina	215,000	23.5	40
South Dakota	43,000	21.3	33
Tennessee	293,000	25.2	44
Texas	1,079,000	23.3	39
Utah	81,000	13.2	5
Vermont	22,000	16.1	15
Virginia	207,000	14.9	8
Washington	194,000	16.9	21
West Virginia	155,000	30.4	47
Wisconsin	199,000	15.8	13
Wyoming	23,000	15.5	11
United States total	13,054,000	20.9%	

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, unpublished estimates of the number of poor related children, 1983-1987; and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, No. 1024, State Population and Household Estimates, With Age, Sex, and Components of Change: 1981-87 (1988), Table 5. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

MAXIMUM AFDC GRANT FOR A FAMILY OF THREE, AND AS A PERCENT OF THE POVERTY LEVEL, JANUARY 1991

	Maximum Grant	Percent of Poverty	Rank
Alabama	$124	14.3%	50
Alaska	891	82.1	1
Arizona	293	33.8	38
Arkansas	204	23.5	46
California	694	80.0	3
Colorado	356	41.0	29
Connecticut	680	78.3	4
Delaware	338	38.9	32
District of Columbia	428	49.3	16
Florida	294	33.9	37
Georgia	280	32.3	41
Hawaii	632	63.3	6
Idaho	317	36.5	35
Illinois	367	42.3	26
Indiana	288	33.2	40
Iowa	426	49.1	17
Kansas	409	47.1	20
Kentucky	228	26.3	44
Louisiana	190	21.9	48
Maine	453	52.2	14
Maryland	406	46.8	21
Massachusetts	539	62.1	10
Michigan[1]	555	63.9	7
Minnesota	532	61.3	11
Mississippi	120	13.8	51
Missouri	292	33.6	39
Montana	370	42.6	25
Nebraska	364	41.9	27
Nevada	330	38.0	34
New Hampshire	546	62.9	9
New Jersey	424	48.8	18
New Mexico	310	35.7	36
New York[2]	703	81.0	2
North Carolina	272	31.3	42
North Dakota	401	46.2	23
Ohio	334	38.5	33
Oklahoma	341	39.3	31
Oregon	444	51.2	15
Pennsylvania	421	48.5	19
Rhode Island	554	63.8	8
South Carolina	210	24.2	45
South Dakota	385	44.4	24
Tennessee	195	22.5	47
Texas	184	21.2	49
Utah	402	46.3	22
Vermont	679	78.2	5
Virginia	354	40.8	30
Washington	531	61.2	12
West Virginia	249	28.7	43
Wisconsin	517	59.6	13
Wyoming	360	41.5	28
United States median	$367	42.3%	

SOURCE: U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, *Overview of Entitlement Programs: 1991 Green Book* (1991), Table 7, pp. 597-598. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

[1]Data are for Washtenaw County.

[2]Data are for Suffolk County.

THE AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING: FAIR MARKET RENT[1] (FMR), AS A PERCENT OF FAMILY INCOME AT THE POVERTY LEVEL[2], OCTOBER 1990

	FMR	As a Percent of Poverty[2]	Rank
Alabama	$321	37.0%	1
Alaska	547	50.4	32
Arizona	564	65.0	45
Arkansas	366	42.2	10
California	434	50.0	29
Colorado	463	53.3	36
Connecticut	555	63.9	43
Delaware	594	68.4	46
District of Columbia	731	84.2	51
Florida	351	40.4	4
Georgia	358	41.2	7
Hawaii	695	69.6	47
Idaho	543	62.6	41
Illinois	445	51.3	34
Indiana	366	42.2	10
Iowa	432	49.8	27
Kansas	437	50.3	31
Kentucky	351	40.4	4
Louisiana	376	43.3	16
Maine	488	56.2	37
Maryland	383	44.1	17
Massachusetts	548	63.1	42
Michigan	393	45.3	20
Minnesota	440	50.7	33
Mississippi	375	43.2	15
Missouri	338	38.9	2
Montana	451	52.0	35
Nebraska	432	49.8	27
Nevada	636	73.3	49
New Hampshire	628	72.4	48
New Jersey	497	57.3	39
New Mexico	416	47.9	24
New York	427	49.2	25
North Carolina	353	40.7	6
North Dakota	427	49.2	25
Ohio	372	42.9	14
Oklahoma	370	42.6	12
Oregon	492	56.7	38
Pennsylvania	388	44.7	19
Rhode Island	559	64.4	44
South Carolina	349	40.2	3
South Dakota	401	46.2	21
Tennessee	362	41.7	8
Texas	371	42.7	13
Utah	412	47.5	23
Vermont	639	73.6	50
Virginia	362	41.7	8
Washington	436	50.2	30
West Virginia	383	44.1	17
Wisconsin	405	46.7	22
Wyoming	497	57.3	39
United States total	n/a	n/a	

SOURCE: *Federal Register*, Vol. 55, No. 190 (October 1, 1990), pp. 40044-40117; and U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, *Overview of Entitlement Programs: 1991 Green Book* (1991), p. 598. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

[1]The Fair Market Rent is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the amount equal to or more than what is paid for rent by 45 percent of people or families who have recently moved. HUD calculates this for different apartment sizes and for each metropolitan area. We used the rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the metropolitan area in each state that had the lowest rent.

[2]We used the Census Bureau's monthly poverty threshold for a three-person family as reported in the Ways and Means *1991 Green Book*, p. 598.

INFANT MORTALITY RATES, CITIES OF 500,000 OR GREATER POPULATION, 1988

	Total		White		Black	
	Rate	Rank	Rate	Rank	Rate	Rank
Baltimore	18.0	20	12.9	19	20.4	11
Boston	13.9	14	8.4	6	22.1	15
Chicago	15.2	16	9.9	12	21.0	13
Cleveland	17.0	17	12.2	17	20.9	12
Columbus	14.2	15	12.5	18	18.0	7
Dallas	9.3	4	8.2	4	12.3	1
Detroit	21.0	21	13.6	20	23.1	17
District of Columbia	23.2	22	19.9	21	26.0	19
Houston	11.3	9	10.4	14	17.0	5
Indianapolis	12.6	11	9.7	11	20.1	9
Jacksonville	11.3	8	9.6	9	14.7	3
Los Angeles	10.1	6	8.3	5	20.2	10
Memphis	17.6	19	9.0	8	21.6	14
Milwaukee	12.1	10	7.8	2	17.5	6
New Orleans	12.7	12	—	—	15.5	4
New York City	13.2	13	11.0	15	18.3	8
Philadelphia	17.5	18	12.0	16	22.5	16
Phoenix	10.9	7	10.1	13	23.5	18
San Antonio	9.5	5	8.9	7	—	—
San Diego	8.1	2	7.6	1	13.9	2
San Francisco	8.4	3	9.6	9	—	—
San Jose	7.8	1	7.8	2	—	—

SOURCE: U.S. Department Of Health And Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States: 1988, Vol. I—Natality* (1990), Table 2-1; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States: 1988, Vol. II—Mortality, Part B* (1990), Table 8-1. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

—Number too small to calculate a reliable rate.

Part V

WE *CAN* ACT TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

Photo by Susie Fitzhugh

WE *CAN* ACT TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

Why is the United States, at a time when citizens of newly free nations across the world look to our ideals for their inspiration, falling so short of those ideals when it comes to our children? Why are our children falling behind the world's children, and why are we leaving so many U.S. children behind their peers, unnecessarily exposed to ill health, to abuse and neglect, to nights without shelter, to failure in school, and to the likelihood that they will be unprepared to assume fully adult roles as parents, citizens, and workers?

One frequent answer is that we cannot do anything about these tragedies: We do not know how to improve the lives of children, or it costs too much, or government cannot do it.

But this answer is wrong. We can and must care for all our children, we do know how, we can afford it, and government has a key role in making it happen, as do parents, religious and community groups, business, and others.

In local communities across the country, programs are working to ensure that more children are healthy, supported by their families, and successful in school. These programs do not involve massive intervention in families' lives. Rather, dedicated program staff make an *investment* in children and their families, many of whom need only a little support now to succeed in the long term. Most children and their parents need child care, not foster care; a check-up, not a hospital bed.

Evaluations show that these preventive programs pay off not only for the children and families they serve but also for the rest of us, because we save tax dollars by preventing damage rather than trying to remedy it after the fact. The well-known longitudinal study of the Perry Preschool Program in Michigan, an intensive early childhood program with home visits, revealed that program participants by their late teens were more likely than those in a control group to have graduated from high school or be in school or employed. They also had fewer pregnancies and fewer and less serious dealings with the criminal justice system. In Elmira, New York, a program of home visits by nurses to first-time mothers found that, for the highest risk young mothers, the home visits reduced the likelihood of abuse and neglect and improved parent-child relationships and child development. Programs that pair caring case managers with pregnant women have reduced the number of babies born at a low birthweight — which means that they have reduced the number of babies likely to need costly medical care in

the early months of life and reduced the likelihood of later disabilities. And across the country are examples of successful school programs that have demonstrated that every child can achieve.

These are not isolated stories, limited to unusual communities. National programs have demonstrated success as well when they have followed the basic principles of investment in prevention, high-quality services, and responsiveness to family needs. The Head Start program provides disadvantaged youngsters with a high-quality preschool education and a range of comprehensive services, which pay off in improved school success and eventual employability. Yet despite a commitment by President Bush and Congress to make Head Start available to all eligible children by 1994, funds appropriated for 1991 are only enough to reach fewer than one in three eligible children. Childhood immunization programs have demonstrated enormous success at saving lives and saving money — about $10 for every $1 spent — in the United States and around the world. Yet immunization rates have fallen in the United States in the 1980s, and the incidence of preventable childhood diseases has skyrocketed. The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides special food supplements for needy pregnant women and young children, at a savings of as much as $3 in short-term Medicaid costs for every $1 invested in the prenatal component of WIC. Yet WIC served less than two-thirds of those potentially eligible in 1991.

We are a can-do nation when we truly commit to a task. More than 560,000 children were served in the Head Start program in its first summer. More than 1,700,000 elderly Americans moved out of poverty in the three years after Congress revised the Social Security Act to index benefits to inflation. We must choose fully to commit ourselves to the task of leaving no child behind.

If we make a commitment, we can succeed. Other nations, no wealthier than we, have been able to care for all of their children. Among the Western European nations and Canada, none loses so many babies to death in the first year, none has so many children born to children, and none has so many children growing up in families without the means to provide the basic supports of food, clothing, and shelter.

What are the reasons? Social scientists point to many, but one is the commitment of all of these nations to programs that Leave No Child Behind. All of these nations make sure that public or private health insurance covers all children, so that no child is excluded from critical preventive care such as a hearing check-up or an immunization because it costs too much. All of these nations provide basic income supports for all families, such as child support guarantees that enable all children to gain from the economic support of two parents, tax credits that cover some of the expense of raising children, and paid parental leaves that enable parents to raise young children and hold onto a job. In addition, many of these

nations provide programs like some of the American successes described above — only they provide them for all children, not a tiny fraction: for example, home visits to all infants and their mothers, or high-quality early childhood education for all preschoolers. We cannot afford to enter tomorrow's world having chosen to care for only some of our children, when other nations point the way by caring for all of theirs.

There is one other reason that people sometimes give for why we cannot succeed in caring for all of our children: that once the damage of ill health, of failure in school, of poverty has been done, we cannot rescue a child's future. Yet while it is true that the more we can invest in early life the better — in suffering averted and in public costs saved — the social scientists who have studied children growing up under great disadvantage say that children are extraordinarily resilient. With the right intervention, with adults who care, with a family that recovers from early economic stress, children can grow up into healthy, self-confident, educated adults ready to take their place as citizens and workers. We must never write a child off — but we must realize that the later we heed a child's cries, the harder and longer we must work to safeguard her future.

We know that we *can* succeed for all of our children. And we know that we *must* succeed for all of our children. It is the only moral choice, and the only choice that secures America's future.

Can-Do America

- We sent 530,000 troops to Desert Storm in seven months.
- We sent $50 billion (in 1992 dollars) in economic aid to Western Europe under the Marshall Plan in the first two years following the end of World War II.
- We served 561,000 children during the first summer of Head Start.
- We moved more than 1.7 million elderly persons out of poverty in the three years following the 1972 revisions to the Social Security Act that indexed benefits to inflation.
- The Resolution Trust Corporation disposed of 273 failed thrift institutions and spent $47 billion to cover the losses in the first 13 months following its creation in 1989. When spending peaks in 1992, it is estimated that we will be paying more than $12 million an hour ($115 billion total) for all deposit insurance obligations (including those of banks as well as thrifts).

PART VI

WHAT THE POLLS SAY

Photo by Linda Bartlett

WHAT THE POLLS SAY

The American people support by large margins greater investment to meet children's essential needs. In public opinion surveys, Americans rank children's well-being as a top priority facing our nation. Voters say the way to safeguard our future is to make sure all children have decent health care and a first-rate education.

- The vast majority of Americans (88 percent) believe strongly that preparing children for school — making sure they are healthy and able to learn — is a high priority for education in this country (Gallup Organization for Phi Delta Kappa, 1990).

- The vast majority of Americans (84 percent) believe strongly in providing top-quality child care to all children, regardless of their parents' ability to pay. Eighty-seven percent believe providing good child care is a responsibility shared by private employers and federal, state, and local governments (Louis Harris, *Family Survey II: Child Care*, 1989).

- In a series of questions on specific investments, Americans supported by substantial margins additional government spending for health care for uninsured children, preschool programs such as Head Start, child care for the poor, drug abuse prevention and treatment for children and youths, and services for disabled and chronically ill children (National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, *General Social Survey*, 1990).

- Sixty-five percent of Americans believe that the Head Start preschool program should be expanded so that all eligible children can be served (Louis Harris, *Family Survey II: Child Care*, 1989).

- Men and women equally (71 percent) favor health care for children. Parents are more likely to support a candidate who advocates improving health care for children (76 percent). But most nonparents (68 percent) also are willing to do the same (National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, *Kids' Clout*, 1990).

Americans also believe that to help children, we must make sure all parents are able to provide for their families. That means all families should have health insurance. Young people, the soon-to-be parents and workers of this country, should have adequate education and job opportunities. Pregnant mothers should be healthy, and all families should have safe housing.

- By a margin of five to one, people want more rather than less government support for prenatal care for pregnant women who can't afford it (National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, *General Social Survey*, 1990).
- Eighty-eight percent of Americans favor federal and state programs giving poor people more opportunities to work. Eighty-seven percent favor expanding drug and alcohol treatment centers and making them more accessible to those who can benefit (*Unfinished Agenda: Race in America*, 1989).
- By a ratio of seven to one, people want stronger government action on providing housing for poor families with children (National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, *General Social Survey*, 1990).
- Virtually all Americans (93 percent) favor initiatives to motivate young people to stay in school. The Youth Corps, which provides literacy and job training for young people who are not in school, garners nearly unanimous support from people polled (*Unfinished Agenda: Race in America*, 1989).

Part VII

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Photo by Jennifer Bishop

QUESTIONS EVERY AMERICAN SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER

Question: How many American children die every year before reaching their first birthday?

- **Answer:** Almost 40,000 American infants, or 10 babies per 1,000 born, die each year.

Question: Where does the United States rank compared with other countries in the proportion of children who die in their first year (the infant mortality rate)?

- **Answer:** The United States ranks nineteenth, behind such nations as Hong Kong, Ireland, and Spain.

Question: Who are the poorest Americans?

- **Answer:** Children. More than one in five American children — or more than 13 million children — is poor, compared with about one in 10 non-elderly adults.

Question: Is child poverty growing in America?

- **Answer:** Yes. In 1990 alone 841,000 children fell into poverty.

Question: In how many of America's poor families with children does a family member work?

- **Answer:** In 3.6 million families, or 63 percent of poor families with children, at least one person worked full- or part-time in 1990. In more than one in five poor families with children, at least one family member worked full-time, full-year in 1990 and still could not earn enough to raise family income above the poverty level.

Question: Have we solved the problem of immunizing our children? How does America compare with other nations?

- **Answer:** No. The percentage of U.S. infants fully protected against polio is worse than 16 other nations. When the immunization rate of nonwhite infants is compared to other nations, the United States ranks fifty-sixth, behind Mongolia and Honduras.

Question: How much does it cost to immunize a child?

- **Answer:** It costs just $150 to provide all the immunizations a child needs between birth and school entry. Every $1 spent to immunize a child saves $10 by preventing illness.

Question: How many Americans became ill from measles in 1990? How many died? (Measles is preventable with childhood immunization.)

- **Answer:** In 1990, when there were to be only 500 cases of measles nationally according to goals set by the U.S. Surgeon General, the United States experienced 27,000 measles cases and nearly 90 deaths.

Question: What proportion of the entering ninth-graders in America's public schools completed high school four years later?

- **Answer:** Slightly more than two-thirds (71 percent) completed high school on time in 1988. The high school graduation rate, which improved rapidly during the 1950s and 1960s, largely stopped improving in the 1980s.

Question: Are today's young families more or less likely to own their own homes than the generation before them?

- **Answer:** Less. Between 1974 and 1987 home ownership rates fell by almost one-third among families headed by parents younger than 25 and by almost one-fifth among those headed by 25- to 29-year-olds.

Question: How many American teenagers became pregnant in 1988?

- **Answer:** About 1 million teens — equivalent to the entire population of Detroit, Michigan — got pregnant in 1988.

Question: How much does the nation save for every $1 invested in quality preschool education programs such as Head Start?

- **Answer:** Research shows that every $1 invested in quality preschool education returns $4.75 because of lower costs for special education, public assistance, and crime.

Question: In 1991 which of these programs will cost the federal government more than $4 billion?

a. The B-2 bomber?
b. The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which provides nutritional help for the needy?
c. The Head Start early childhood program?

- **Answer:** (a) Only the B-2 bomber will cost more than $4 billion in 1991. In FY 1991 the WIC program will cost only $2.3 billion and serve about 60 percent of all eligible women and children, even though every dollar spent on WIC for a pregnant woman saves $3 in later Medicaid costs. The Head Start program will cost less than $2 billion and serve fewer than one in three eligible children, even though President Bush and Congress promised to provide full funding for all eligible children by 1994.

URGENT QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR STATE OFFICES

- What specific steps will you take to ensure that all young children are immunized fully?
- What steps would you support to ensure that all pregnant women have full access to prenatal care and that all children receive regular preventive health care and treatment?
- Do you support including funding in our state's budget to supplement federal funds for Head Start and the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)?
- What should our state do to increase the availability of affordable, quality child care, preschool, and early childhood development programs?
- How would you reduce child abuse and strengthen and preserve families?
- What extra resources would you target to schools whose children need special assistance?
- How do you propose to reduce our state's dropout rate?
- What steps do you propose to reduce this state's high teenage pregnancy rate?
- What specific steps have you taken and will you take to reduce this state's large number of families with children that cannot find affordable housing?
- What will you do to reduce childhood poverty in this state?

URGENT QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR THE U.S. HOUSE AND SENATE

- What will you do to ensure that all young children are immunized fully?
- What steps would you support to ensure that all pregnant women have full access to prenatal care and that all children receive regular preventive health care and treatment?
- Do you support full funding for programs such as Head Start and the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), so that they can serve every eligible child?
- How do you propose to improve the quality of schools serving poor and minority children, so that all American children can achieve the National Education Goals? What should be the federal role in ensuring that all children receive a first-rate education?
- How would you reduce child abuse, preserve and strengthen families, and avoid the unnecessary removal of children from their homes?
- What steps will you take to expand the supply of affordable housing for families with children?
- How do you propose to reduce childhood poverty in America? Will you work to ensure that any congressional proposal for middle-class tax relief includes a refundable tax credit that will benefit *all* families with children?
- How do you propose to assist America's economically squeezed young families?

Part VIII

STEPS TO TAKE

Photo by John Arms

STEPS TO TAKE

If you are a candidate for public office:

- Speak frequently to all audiences about the conditions of children in America and what we must do to Leave No Child Behind.
- Learn the facts about children in America and teach them to others.
- Refute the myths about children in America as you speak to all audiences. Use your campaign as an opportunity to draw America together around its children, to mend rather than widen racial and ethnic and economic gaps.
- Visit programs that serve children, in order to better understand the desperate conditions children experience and the kinds of community and government interventions that can change a child's or a family's life.

After you are elected:

- Vote to ensure that every child has a Healthy Start, a Head Start, and a Fair Start.
- Work to carry out the children's agenda in this book.
- Use your public platform to get children's issues higher on the agenda of your state or city as well as the nation.
- Keep telling the American public the truth about children's needs and America's future. Keep advocating the importance of cost-saving investments in children.
- Continue to visit programs that serve children, and learn from the extraordinary people who work in them and from the children and families themselves.

If you are a community leader, child advocate, or a concerned citizen who cares about America's future:

- Ask every candidate the hard questions about children, and keep asking after the election is over.
- Learn the facts about children in America and teach them to others.

- Let candidates know that you are committed to a Healthy Start, a Head Start, and a Fair Start for every child. Educate candidates about the critical importance of investment in children to America's security.
- Consider a stint of public service. Run for public office at any level on a child investment platform.
- Consider following the lead of state-level advocates in California, Florida, Minnesota, and Arizona and commission a poll to show that citizens in your state care about children.
- Visit programs for children, and take candidates with you. Visit neonatal intensive care nurseries, boarder baby wards, homeless shelters, decaying housing projects, custodial schools, and juvenile institutions to see firsthand the unnecessary suffering that comes from failing to invest in our children. Visit prenatal care programs, transitional apartments, excellent schools, and first-rate early childhood programs to teach candidates about investments that truly can change a child's life.

CDF Resources for 1992

To help you meet the needs of children in your community, CDF will publish the following materials (prices and approximate publication dates are listed).

Leave No Child Behind crusade materials: A citizen's flyer, bumper stickers, and buttons are being produced, as well as posters and other media items you may localize. For more information, write Leave No Child Behind, CDF, 122 C Street N.W., Washington, DC 20001.

CDF's 1992 Legislative Agenda (free, Jan. 1992)

CDF's Nonpartisan Congressional Voting Record of 1991 ($3.00, Jan. 1992)

The Nation's Investment in Children: An Analysis of the President's FY 1993 Budget Proposals ($3.00, Feb. 1992)

The State of America's Children 1992 ($14.95, March 1992)

An Advocate's Guide to Lobbying and Political Activity for Nonprofits: What You Can and Can't Do ($5.95, Nov. 1991)

Helping Low-Income and Minority Students Reach the National Education Goals ($4.50, Jan. 1992)

Helping Children by Strengthening Families ($4.50, Jan. 1992)

Vanishing Dreams: The Economic Plight of America's Young Families ($4.50, Dec. 1991)

Child Poverty in America ($4.50, Nov. 1992)

Embracing Our Children: A Child Advocacy Guide for Black Churches ($9.95, July 1992)

CDF Board Of Directors

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Chair
Partner
The Rose Law Firm
Little Rock, AR

Nancy Abraham
Senior Vice President/Investments
Shearson Lehman Hutton
New York, NY

J. LeVonne Chambers
Director
NAACP Legal Defense and
Educational Fund, Inc.
New York, NY

Laura Chasin
Social Worker
Cambridge, MA

John D. Deardourff
Chairman
Bailey, Deardourff & Associates
Falls Church, VA

Thomas R. Draper
Senior Vice President for
Community Relations
Time Warner, Inc.
New York, NY

Marian Wright Edelman
President
Children's Defense Fund
Washington, DC

Winifred Green
President
Southern Coalition for
Educational Equity
Jackson, MS

Lucy Hackney
Founder and President
Pennsylvania Partnerships
for Children
Philadelphia, PA

Henry E. Hampton
President
Blackside, Inc.
Boston, MA

Dorothy I. Height
National President
National Council of Negro
Women
Washington, DC

David W. Hornbeck
Education Consultant
Hornbeck and Associates
Baltimore, MD

James A. Joseph
President
Council on Foundations, Inc.
Washington, DC

Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.
(Retired)
Washington, DC

Donna E. Shalala
Chancellor
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI

Susan Thomases
Partner
Willkie, Farr & Gallagher
New York, NY

Thomas A. Troyer
Partner
Caplin & Drysdale
Washington, DC

Bailus Walker, Jr., Ph.D., M.P.H.
Dean of Public Health
University of Oklahoma
Health Sciences Center
Oklahoma City, OK

Suzanne S. Weil
Independent Producer
Santa Monica, CA

Eddie N. Williams
President
Joint Center for Political
and Economic Studies
Washington, DC

One Day in the Lives of American Children

Every day in America:

8,441	teens become sexually active.
2,756	teens become pregnant.
1,340	babies are born to teen mothers.
2,754	babies are born out of wedlock.
638	babies are born to mothers receiving late or no prenatal care.
742	babies are born at low birthweight (less than 5.5 pounds).
2,685	babies are born into poverty.
107	babies die before their first birthday.
2	children younger than five are murdered.
248	children are arrested for violent crimes.
176	children are arrested for drug abuse.
427	children are arrested for alcohol abuse or drunk driving.
10,988	public school students are suspended each school day.
2,250	students ages 16 to 24 drop out each school day.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Children's Defense Fund
122 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 628-8787